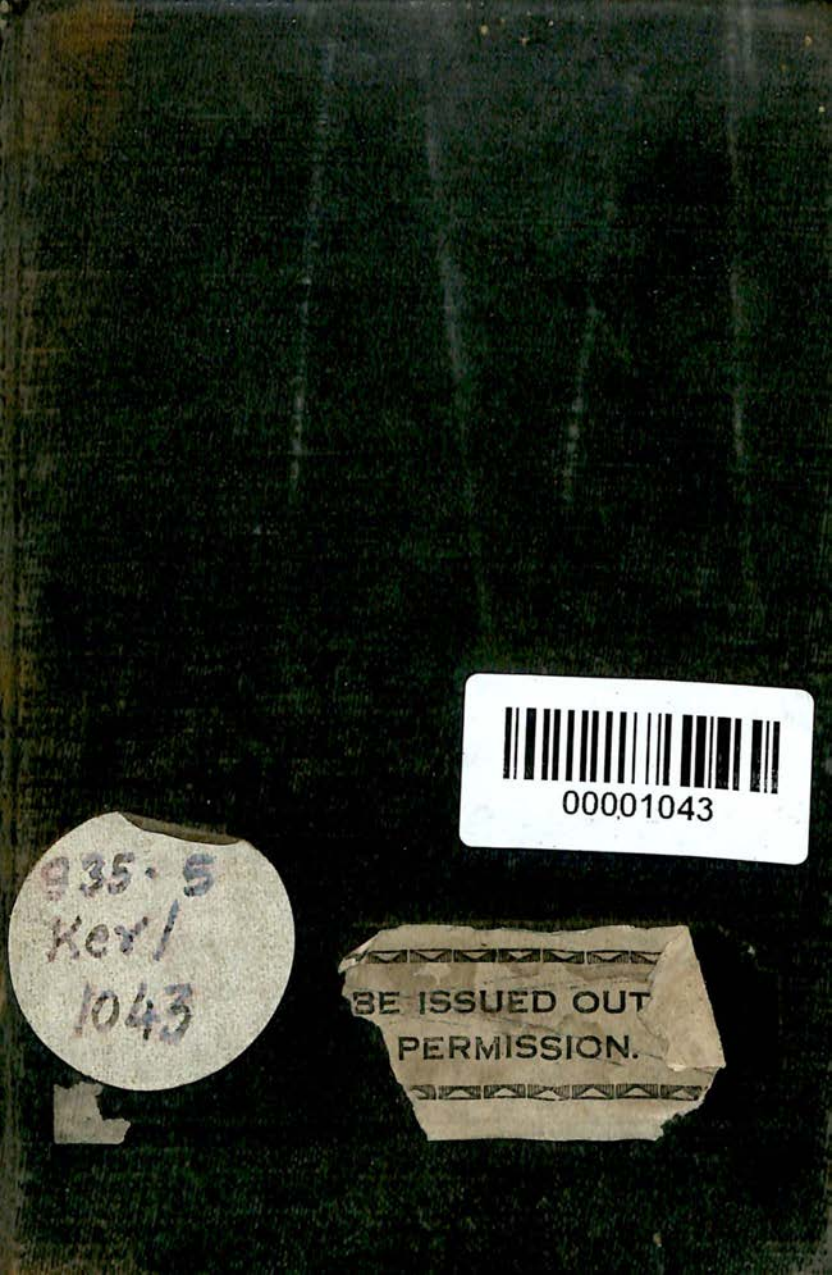
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STUDIES IN

ANCIENT PERSIAN HISTORY

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BY

P. KERSHASP

INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE

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Studies in Ancient Persian History

INTRODUCTION

THE pages that follow plunge straightway into the subject of Persian history, and presuppose some knowledge on the reader's part. It will be here convenient to offer some prefatory notes and to prepare the ground.

The book is intended to lay the foundation of a correct view of ancient Persian history, which has been hitherto approached from a biassed standpoint. Accordingly it has to include a general review of authorities, ancient and modern. The important modern authorities, whose judgments are criticised in the following pages, will be glanced at here.

Of these, in English, Gibbon, Malcolm, and Rawlinson occupy the front rank. It cannot be denied that they have rendered valuable aid in elucidating Persian history; but they betray, consciously or unconsciously,

too much partiality for Greek and Latin writers who are weighed in the scales in the body of the book. Gibbon is not primarily concerned with Persian history, and his digressions into it, or incidental treatment of it, are not based on an exhaustive erudition like that which he brought to bear on the story of the Roman or Byzantine Empire. He wrote in the eighteenth century, and was not conversant with the literature of the East, as Malcolm was not a little at first hand. Some of his opinions coming within the purview of this sketch have therefore to be combated.

Malcolm gives a much more sympathetic account than either of the two others, and as he won distinction as a practical administrator and had wide experience of the East, his remarks are stamped with a keen insight. Yet he is not altogether free from the assumption of superiority which English and German savants affect in their treatment of Oriental history, and which is almost fatal to a scientific appreciation of historical facts. Professor Browne, the author of "A Literary History of Persia," who makes excursions into political history, votes Malcolm down as already obsolete. Malcolm largely makes use of Arab and Persian histories, and that circumstance enhances the value of his pronouncements, as will appear later. He does

not seem to have studied some writers consulted by Rawlinson, and further, the ancient inscriptions had not been deciphered in his time. Rawlinson has an advantage over him in these respects, but he has not the grip which Malcolm possesses over the practical problems of government. He frequently speaks from an academic standpoint. On the other hand, Rawlinson's profound researches in "classical" works have disinterred much instructive information regarding the Persian character and institutions. He, however, betrays his unscientific bent of mind, by gravely arguing, in his translation of Herodotus, for the demoniac inspiration of the Delphic and other oracles.

Professor Browne's Literary History is a repertory of scholarly learning, and a few quotations have been transferred from his pages to these. He has, however, sworn fealty to Mahomedanism and Arab writers, and on that account is debarred from doing justice to the ancient Persians. Political history does not strictly fall within his domain, but he has chosen to dogmatise on it. His views on that subject are taken as representative of the latest school of Orientalists, and dissected as such. Only the French intellect seems capable of making a judicial estimate of matters which have been once exhibited through the dis-

torting lenses of Greek and Latin books, but no French writer has appeared to gather the up-to-date material. The present writer has from the beginning found it impossible to assent to the disparaging views so loudly voiced in English books on ancient Persia and its history, and hence the undertaking, which is the first instalment of a larger project.

The name of Richardson occurs in the book. He is the author of a Persian-English Dictionary now out of print, and has contributed a thoughtful "Dissertation," as he calls it, on Persian history, language, &c. His book was published in the eighteenth century, and so the bulk of his dissertation is out of date. The later researches, however, do not touch his disquisitions on the relative merits of Persian chronicles and those in Latin and Greek.

In discussing Arab and Persian historians, only a certain number of writers have been instanced. For the purposes of the argument, a complete list is not called for. In different parts of the book, the best Persian and Arab authorities are quoted, and here and there their position in the scale of precedence is indicated. Only the scantiest biographical details about most of these are available, the art of biography not being

much in favour or demand among the two nations, at least in those early days. These details scarcely aid us in finding out what the acquirements and means of knowledge of the historians were, what sort of training they had for their task, and what opportunities for eliciting information on subjects on which they write were within their reach; unless they choose to lapse in their prefaces or flowery dedications into a little of autobiography, and are in a humour to be communicative. The internal evidence is very often the only index to their methods of work and their habits of industry. So far as ancient Persia is concerned, the same motives influence them all alike, which will be duly set out.

Of course, among them, the leading position must be allotted to Firdausi, who composed the great epic in the Persian language, the "Shahnameh." Because he happens to be a poet, he has not been sufficiently exploited as a historian, though his avowed aim was to revive the annals of ancient Persia. The best translation of the 60,000 couplets of Firdausi is that executed in French by J. Mohl, who has prefixed well-considered prefatory notices to his different volumes. The text printed by him is also excellent.

Social, literary, legal, religious, economic,

and political questions are freely tackled in the following pages, and, in fact, history in these days must take cognisance of the various factors whose interaction and changes evolve the shifting panorama of human affairs. Certain aspects of the Greek, early Christian, Byzantine, and Mahomedan civilisations, have been touched on, and illustrations and analogies drawn from modern history to reinforce novel arguments. The modern Indian administration purports to be a judicious blend of Western and Eastern methods of government. The test of Indian experience, which is applied in these pages to certain reforms made by Naushirwan, is therefore perfectly legitimate and the best available.

I

ANCIENT Persian history is, roughly speaking, without attempting to reconcile the Persian and Greek accounts, made up of the pre-Achemenian and Achemenian dynasties, the Seleucidæ, the Parthian kingdom, and the House of Sassan. The domination of the Seleucidæ and the Parthians was that of foreign rulers, whilst the other dynasties symbolised the national government of Persia. In the Persian chronology, the pre-Achemenian kings account for a period of 2441 years, of which 1000 years were occupied by Zohak and his successors, who belonged to Assyrian or other foreign tribes. Among the Achemenians the Greeks reckon Cyrus (559–529 B.C.) as the first ruler, but Darius I. himself (521–485 B.C.), the third in line from Cyrus, in his cuneiform inscriptions, puts himself forward as the ninth king in descent from his ancestor Hakhamanish or Achemenes. The last of the Achemenians was Darius III., who was slain by his treacherous Satraps in 330 B.C., after Alexander had overrun Persia.

The Seleucidæ were descendants of Seleucus Nicator, a general of Alexander the Great, who, in the confusion prevailing upon Alexander's death, seized upon the throne of Persia. They were quickly supplanted by the Parthian kings, who had their innings from 150 B.C. to A.D. 227. The Parthian kingdom stood outside the stream of national life, and is meagrely and unceremoniously treated by the Eastern writers. These kings are classed under the dynastic name of Ashkanians, which corresponds to Arsacidæ. They do not appear to have made much impression on the Persian character or civilisation, and probably the Persians continued to be governed by their own chieftains, who simply acknowledged the suzerainty of Parthia. With the extinction of the Sassanians by the death of Yezdegird III. in A.D. 651–2, there is a fresh break in the national history of Persia, the Arab conquest ushering in a new order of things, a social and religious upheaval, and changes in the language.

In these studies I have endeavoured to solve some of the thorny questions bearing on the history of ancient Persia, and thereby help towards a clearer understanding of the many phases of Persian rule and civilisation. The classical writers have hitherto had practically everything their own way, and I have

therefore deemed it fit to carry war into the enemy's camp. My views are diametrically opposed to those generally received in Europe, and so I have taken care to fortify them with apt quotations from a number of authorities. I have divided the field of inquiry into seven sections: (1) The appraisement of Mahomedan chroniclers; (2) Of classical writers; (3) The character and civilisation of the ancient Persians compared with those of other nations; (4) The heroic age of Persia; (5) Persian chivalry and its influences; (6) A study of Naushirwan the Just; and (7) Causes of the downfall of the Sassanian Empire which stretched from A.D. 229 to 652. Incidentally, side-lights are thrown on connected topics under each section.

The Mahomedan Chroniclers

The sources of ancient Persian history anterior to the Arab conquest mainly fall under two classes: (1) The Mahomedan writers, *i.e.* Arabs and Persians; and (2) Greek and Latin authors.

It has been laid to the charge of Persian authors, that a rooted prepossession with them is their pride in their ancient history, and that they have, where possible, twisted

single episodes to the honour of their compatriots. Barbier de Maynard, who after J. Mohl's death translated the concluding part of the Persian Epic, emphasises Firdausi's patriotism and draws attention to the omission by him of the price paid by Chosroës for his alliance with the Emperor Maurice. Malcolm, in the course of his narrative, scatters not a few allusions to the national vanity, and in this respect, probably, the other English writers have followed suit. This idea is really a strange delusion, and a historical retrospect will make the position sufficiently clear.

There never was any enthusiasm in the Mahomedan world or Mahomedan Persia about the pristine glories of Persia, and on this point we have proofs dating from the earliest days of Arab invasion. Saad-ibn-i-wekas, the victorious general, seized the collection made by Danishwar, under the orders of Sassanian kings, of the materials of Persian history. At first, the portion of history dealing with the Peshdadyan, that is, the primeval dynasty of Persia, was translated and sent to the Khalif Omar. He was satisfied, and ordered the whole to be rendered into Arabic. When, however, the story reached the stage which marks the promulgation of Zoroaster's cult and the ad-

ventures of Zal and the Simurgh, the Khalif signified his disapproval, and the history was placed on a sort of index expurgatorius. The volteface of Firdausi himself, who celebrated the deeds of the heroes of Persia in sublime strains and vaunted his achievement in his bitter satire on his patron the Sultan Muhamad of Ghizni, is still more of a surprise, and should serve as a beacon-blaze of warning to rash theorists. Declined into the vale of years he began his "Yusuf and Zuleika," a theme borrowed from the Koran, wherein he recants his opinions of Persian kings and heroes. He gives out that their deeds were fabulous, and that he was next going to chant a truer and holier theme :

Na gûyam digar dâstân-i-mûlûk
Dilam seer shûd az âstân-i-mûlûk.
. . . . . .
Ki ân dâstânhâ dûrûgh-ast pâk
Du Sad az ân na yarzad yak mûshti-khâk.

Translation.

I am not going any more to recount the stories of kings. I have had enough of the royal courts. . . . Because those stories are unalloyed falsehoods ; two hundred of them are not worth a handful of dust.

Here, moreover, an authoritative explanation has been furnished to us by a grandson of Tamerlane.

In a preface attached to the "Shahnameh" by order of Bysunghur in A.D. 1425–26, it is noted that the object of Firdausi in turning to a scriptural subject was to ingratiate himself with the Khalif (Al Kadir Billah) who had sheltered him after his flight from Muhamad's court, and viewed with displeasure the praises bestowed on heathenish kings. Even after his death the poet was pursued by Moslem bigotry. The Sheikh of Tous, where Firdausi died, refused to read the customary services at his grave, and was only moved from his resolution by a superstitious dream he saw, which represented Firdausi as seated on a throne in Paradise. Thus bigotry played not a little part in the chequered fortunes of the immortal Epic.

The attitude of present-day Persia is not one whit more rational, in spite of the tales spread by European travellers. In India I have come across some Persians whose sympathies were broadened by their stay in foreign countries, and they were quite positive that the "Shahnameh" is despised by the orthodox in Persia to this day, albeit they may recite some of its verses, a pastime of which all Persians are so fond. I have also met an otherwise intelligent Persian youth who made no secret of his contempt for the annals of Persia in the pre-Islamite epochs.

In assessing Persian testimony, this posture of affairs has an immense significance. It must be remembered that the testimony is reluctantly given.

However, in the eleventh century, there occurs a singular interlude in this monotony of sweeping condemnation; various historical reasons produced an outburst of patriotic feeling in ancient Persia, and a whole crop of imitations, Namehs in prose and verse, enriched the literature of Persia. But, as Gobineau explains, the conditions and ferment in which these Namehs sprung up made them more authentic and trustworthy than other chronicles which were further removed from the fountain-head of tradition. The Dehkans, who were territorial magnates in the Kohistan, that is, the mountainous region of Rai, governing people brought up like themselves in the ancient faith of Iran, had been left undisturbed by the tide of Mahomedan invasion and were the depositories of the lore of ancient Persia, which they jealously guarded. The authors of the Namehs frequently consulted them and their books, and were naturally inclined to revere the traditions which they laboriously hunted up. Thus, when genuine patriotic motives came into play, the researches increased in accuracy, and with them the record, a result

somewhat disconcerting to a certain section of scholars.

Mirkhond (A.D. 1432–1498), the author of a Persian history, "Rauzat-ûs-sufâ," who is on the whole a fair-minded and temperate writer, lays down in his foreword the qualifications which should distinguish a historian. Of these one is that a historian should be perfect in faith and pure in religion! A second canon, expressed with much circumlocution, is that "when the historian is orthodox and faithful, those who seek high accomplishments and endowments derive full assurance or tranquillity of mind;" that is to say, an unquestioning faith is the *sine quâ non* of a historian's vocation, and readers can only believe a historical work if the author is free from all taint of heresy. Mirkhond is here perfectly sincere and naïf, and not trying to insinuate himself into the good graces of his public. Mirkhond is generally a dispassionate writer, and if rigid orthodoxy is his standard of veracity, the frame of mind of other Moslem writers who cannot pretend to his scrupulousness and precision may be imagined.

Again, the Arab historians exhibit a child-like delight in the romantic history of ancient Persia, but all the same we can detect an undercurrent of dislike and contempt. For

example, Tha'âlibi, a well-known chronicler, interrupts the thread of his narrative in order to indulge in some banal reflections, which are obviously suggested by a belief in the plenary inspiration of the Koran. Yakubi devotes only a page and a half to the earlier dynasties of Persia, and Professor Browne has taken the trouble to translate one passage from that compendium, which makes some scoffing references to these dynasties. The professor invokes blessings on the Arab's head, but omits to inform his readers that the same Yakubi, with solemn pomposity, taking as his starting-point the idle prattle of the Koran on the origins of man, enumerates the lives of twenty-three individuals between Adam and Moses, some of whom attain a fabulous longevity! In the light of Palæontology, the brand-new creation of a pair of human beings, the progenitors of the species, is an obvious fiction, whilst again, between the prehistoric cave-dwellers and the dawn of Jewish sacred history, thousands of generations have intervened. On the other hand, this book will presently show that the heroic age of Persia reposes on a solid substratum of facts. Thus our faith is much weakened in the infallibility of Yakubi and the perspicacity of his English admirer. To be more precise, critical acumen is not to be

expected of the Arab writers who implicitly trust in the Koran as the infallible word and wisdom of God, and make its asseverations the touchstone of the pure gold of truth.

The moral to be drawn from the foregoing lessons is, that Moslem writers are hostile and prejudiced witnesses, with the exceptions already specified. Exaggeration is their besetting sin, and hence incidents creditable to Persia, or of a neutral colour such as the gorgeous pomps of Persian kings, are magnified through force of habit, not from any love of the infidels who ruled over Persia.

Mahomedan writings labour under a further drawback. One article of the Mahomedan faith, or a corollary therefrom, is, that the Koran embraces the whole circle of sciences, and that what is inconsistent with its contents is false and pernicious. Accordingly, the Moslem writers were not very eager to study patiently and carefully alien institutions. Peculiarly Arab and Moslem customs, such as the seclusion of women, the harem, &c., intrude into the fold of old Persian life. Firdausi, though on the whole painstaking, has not escaped some errors and glaring anachronisms. He drags in the mention of Baghdad, a city associated with the Kalifate, and dating from A.D. 762, in the reign of Faridun, which is lost in the mist of ages pre-

ceding the Christian era, converts Alexander into a Christian, and confounds the Medean sage Zoroaster with the Semitic Abraham. To take another illustration: A great traveller like the poet Sa'adi, who was a Suffi, and so more or less heterodox, launches a tirade against the Avesta (which enshrines the ordinances of Zoroaster), as he calls it, of the Indian Brahmins, whose hospitality he abused in Somnath.

Taking the Moslem writers, Arabic and Persian together, their excellences and deficiencies lie on the surface. The Pehlavi records, upon which they drew, have not survived the ravages of time, but among themselves the Moslem chroniclers throw a mutually reflected light. The industry of some authors is astonishing, nay, immense. Some books attained vast proportions: Tabari turned out a huge quantity of writing regularly during forty years, and one work of Masoudi, "Akhbâr-uz-Zemân," a universal history, overflowed into thirty volumes. All the Moslem books contain references to earlier writers. But no effort is made to discriminate between them, or to collate their works, neither are their comparative merits weighed in the balance. Apparently every earlier writer and pioneer is treated with equal deference; and conflicting versions

are given side by side. These are not critically sorted, and in the end the compiler winds up with pious ejaculations, "God knows best," or "God knows the truth." Still some facts or episodes are retailed with sufficient accuracy, though for the most part statements of facts are loose and almost careless. Method is not strictly observed, especially in the unwieldy universal chronicles. Repetitions, inconsistencies, and confusions are not guarded against. The chroniclers have no sense of proportion or perspective. Unimportant matters are overladen with details and claim disproportionate attention, whilst matters of vital moment are at times disposed of curtly.

The lineage and circumstances of the birth of Ardeshir Babekan are minutely studied, and different versions quoted, but on the other hand, with one exception, no chronicler enters into the details of his legislation, and few dwell on his remodelling of the social edifice. His religious revolution, a capital event of his reign, is left in obscurity, though one or two curious facts connected with it are repeated by several writers. Again, Naushirwan's administrative and fiscal measures, which have made his reign memorable, are dismissed in a few lines by some prose writers, who relate at needless length some apocryphal stories. On one occasion, jackals

swarmed in large numbers into parts of Persia from Tartary, and made night hideous with their howls. Naushirwan is perturbed by this phenomenon, and confers with his viziers and mobeds, taking action on their advice. Almost all chroniclers linger over this story, whilst economising words and space with reference to that king's many reforms. The presents and Embassies sent by kings from countries far and wide to Naushirwan's Court are described, and even the forms of epistles and the style adopted by them in addressing him are quoted verbatim. The style, an artificial and ornate composition, interests Moslem writers keenly, and it may almost be suspected that they do not strictly adhere to the originals in the last-mentioned matters, and perhaps start a literary competition on their own account.

In the reign of Khusrao Perwiz, the wheel of fortune turned one way first, and then jerked right round with dramatic suddenness. Persia was at the maximum of its expansion in the first half of his reign, and in the second half the enemy struck at its very heart, wresting back from him all conquests. Yet the Moslem chroniclers are scarcely conscious of these caprices of Fortune, and waste pages over the outward emblems of his power and the luxuriance of his palaces.

To them, the Court ceremonial is delightful, and, in fact, the theatrical or spectacular side of human affairs specially appeals to them. Improbabilities do not disconcert them. Prophecies, omens, portents, dreams, are spun out at tedious length. They dearly love the marvellous, and revel in it. They are fond of anecdotes, but do not trouble to sift and reject any as incredible or incongruous with the conditions of the times or the antecedents and character of the actors. The personal gossip, however, is not without its uses. It sometimes unexpectedly reveals the inner qualities of the subject, and even the general tone and character of the age in which he moved and had his being.

No serious endeavour is made to penetrate into the motives and policies of kings and statesmen. The probable causes of war or administrative action are not inquired into or patiently worked out, the underlying assumption being that everything depends on the arbitrary will of sovereigns, which is subject to no laws of action. The Moslem writers were not men of affairs, and have no political theories of their own, which is by no means to be lamented on every occasion. Their religious predilections may obtrude any moment, but no moral sentiments garnish the narratives. When they do venture on any

moralisings, these are feeble and platitudinous. Massacres and treacheries are unconcernedly set out, even with their gruesome particulars; but no censure is passed or indignation expressed, unless the narrator's religious susceptibilities are outraged.

In style, the Persian and Arabic writings differ, though not a few natives of Persia wrote in Arabic in the early centuries of the Hijrah. The Arabic style is generally restrained and chaste, free from ornaments; the Persian teems with superlatives, hyperboles, and redundancies. Accuracy is unwittingly sacrificed, in the Persian writings, to rhetorical artifices. The simplicity and directness of the early Arabic histories are more impressive than the prolixity of the Persian style, and tend far more to perspicuity and exactitude. The Persian writers take some events and ideas for granted, as if their readers shared with them a common fund of knowledge and terminology. The Arabic books, being principally addressed to the learned and Arab audiences of the day, contain exegetic comments on the ancient lore of Persia, which are often of great service to present-day inquirers.

One blemish infects all, specially the Arab compilers. They are under a constant irresistible temptation to jumble up the Iranian

with Semitic and Biblical legends. Jamshid is made to stand for Solomon, though one has not the remotest connection with the other. Zoroaster is made to spell Abraham by some. Strangest of all, Masoudi (who died in A.D. 957), the author of "Muroudj-ûdh-dhahab," a clear-sighted writer on the whole, invents or copies from some one else a genealogical tree of the Sassanians, which is made to mount up to Abraham! In this genealogy, the Sassanians are the progeny of the Peshdadyan Minutchehr, and Minutchehr is of the seed of Abraham! The true explanation is that this is a piece of literary pedantry. We clearly observe the process at work on the term Dhu'l-Quaranayn, of the Koran, occurring in an obscure context. Tabari and Masoudi, among others, rehearse the series of desperate philological and etymological exercises, by dint of which the Moslem believers landed into the identity of that name with Iskandar or Alexander. Primitive crude learning lends itself to such trifling and playing with words. The Koran, besides, was to the Moslems the repository of all true knowledge, and hence they had to adapt their fresh historical erudition and researches to its deliverances. Martin Haug, an able Pehlavi and Zend scholar, has a theory, which is adopted by Professor Browne, that the so-called Guebers,

i.e., Zoroastrians of Persia, in order to escape certain political disabilities, identified Zoroaster with Abraham. This theory would not touch Masoudi's flights of imagination in secular history.

The same incurable proclivity of the Moslem writers to squeeze their historical acquisitions into conformity with the unhistorical teachings of the Koran is further exemplified in Masoudi's account of ethnical origins, which he borrows from other writers. The Persians, he says, were thought by some to have descended from Joseph, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham; by others from Lot, and by a third party of cranks from Noah! All this time they knew that the Persians themselves carried back their descent to Iradj, a son of Faridun, explaining the term expressive of their nationality "Irânians" as a derivative from the same name. There are some more similar aberrations. The Persian crown was alleged to have passed out of Faridun's family after his death, and to have perched on the head of Isaac! Next, we read that Sâssân, an ancestor of the Sassanian kings, who lived several hundred years before Mahomed, went on a pilgrimage to Mecca and performed the customary Moslem rites, and that Persians used to make offerings at the shrine there!

II

The Greek and Latin Authors

WHENEVER a conflict arises between the accounts of the classical writers and Moslem, the English scholars specially side with the former. I am not acquainted with German, but the peeps which I am permitted to obtain into German scholarship on the historical side of Oriental studies have created an impression that it is marred by "cocksureness" and pedantry, whilst English scholarship within the same limits is disfigured by a narrow and insular outlook. The lucid and logical French intellect is exempt from these defects, and its impartial and well-balanced criticism always affords pleasure even when it provokes dissent.

After all, the Greek writers do not even agree among themselves, and that circumstance detracts from the weight of their testimony. Ctesias ridicules Herodotus' credulity, and both, in certain respects, differ from Xenophon. It would be superfluous here to indicate the many contradictions; a number

of writers who have devoured the books of the historians, Grote and others, have particularised them. Add to this, the Greeks and Romans were the hereditary enemies of Persia, and had their share of national vanity in a full measure.

Freeman, a fervent partisan of Greece, analyses Greek sentiments towards Asiatics. "The old Greek deemed the barbarian, unless he was protected by some special compact, to be his natural foe and his natural slave. War between the two was looked upon as the regular order of things." The sage, Aristotle, who exercised a dictatorial authority in intellectual matters in the Dark Ages of Europe, and who still receives homage as the greatest philosopher of antiquity from classicists, regarded the Eastern nations as born for slavery! No amount of mentality is sufficient to redeem the character of such a people.

Malcolm was not blind to the faults of the Greek writers. He observes that if the Persian accounts are fabulous and poetical, those of the Greeks are narrow, partial, and inconclusive.

Gobineau boldly stakes all on the indigenous narratives, and neatly hits off the mental attitude of Herodotus. Prefacing that Herodotus was writing for the instruction of the

posterity of the victors of Marathon and Platea, he goes on to say: "l'ouvrage d'Herodote ne pouvais pas être un simple chant de triomphe. . . . En dehors de ce thème il restait beaucoup de griefs mutuels à indiquer, beaucoup de situations fausses à justifier."

It is the undisguised design of Herodotus in writing his history to glorify Greece in her struggles with the Barbaroi. He is the father of the myth of an unquenchable antipathy between Europe and Asia, which the classicists keep on hugging. It is perhaps from him that the classicists have taken their cue for centuries and spoken scornfully of Asiatic civilisation. He draws the long bow, whenever he has a chance, and reports wondrous tales, as if they were facts, to a people who were credulous and inquisitive like himself. His mendacity, in places, is monumental; in the battle of Marathon, he gravely sets down, 6400 Persians fell, and only 192 Athenians! The Persian expeditions he minutely describes, which were the *raison d'être* of his book, were, if believed at all, probably punitive expeditions intended for the chastisement of the piratical Greeks, but he conceives them, in a fine frenzy, as provoking a war of national defence, the defence of Greek liberties against the tyranny of Asia. Even the

powers of heaven, the Greek deities, fought on the side of Greece, and scattered to the winds Persia's naval and land forces by raising a storm at the opportune moment! His partisanship obtrudes itself all along, though his censures of Athenian conduct in details and his admiration of the domestic life of the Persians are counted in his favour. Where national susceptibilities were not offended, he did not falsify history and had no motive in doing so. A monotonous chant of praise would not have satisfied his artistic tastes or instincts, we may guess, or else he foresaw, would not gain an unhesitating assent from posterity.

In Greece there was no end of jubilation over the alleged successful resistance offered to the hosts of Darius and Xerxes, and pæans of joy rang through the later ages of literature. The cry has been caught up even in English poetry. Yet it has never occurred to classical scholars to distrust the story of the invasions. There is an antecedent improbability in the tales that Darius marched with 600,000 soldiers, as asserted by Justin, and that Xerxes had marshalled five millions odd men and 4207 ships. Rawlinson conjectures that the Persian army could scarcely have exceeded a million combatants, which conjecture is very wide of the mark. The

world was sparsely populated in those days, and wars were frequent. The mustering of 5,283,220 men and also of 517,610 sailors, with all the commissariat and transport arrangements to be made, and no railways to facilitate carriage, would have been a task beyond the capacity of any ruler. Besides the naval armament was too large to manœuvre in the narrow Greek seas, and such immense land forces could not have deployed or operated in a small mountainous country. The legal maxim, "falsus in uno, falsus in omnibus," would make short work of such a story, but at any rate the palpable falsehoods in these respects lessen the credibility which may attach to the whole transaction. Herodotus, as has been seen, also piles up the casualty list on the side of the Persians, thus weakening his case still further. These are the salient and preliminary points which arouse suspicion.

Let us now look a little closer and more deeply into the story as it winds about. With the exaltation peculiar to a Greek scholar, Grote is prepared to swallow the whole story with all its details, however bizarre, of the Persian invasions. He puts forth the Greek version in its most specious shape, and hence an answer which confutes him should be decisive. Sardis was burnt in 503 B.C. by

the Ionians, and Darius, so the tale runs, was thrown into paroxysms of rage. When he was informed that the Athenians had joined in this act of outrage, he demanded who they were. On receiving the answer, he took up the bow and shot as high as he could towards the heavens, exclaiming "Grant me, Zeus, to revenge myself on the Athenians." He also desired an attendant to remind him thrice every day at dinner, "Master, remember the Athenians." Grote at this point admires the epic handling of Herodotus and the Homeric incident. These are damaging admissions to make, for they suggest conscious imitation on the part of the historian. The story of the wars was intended for the consumption and delectation of the Greeks, who would the more readily accept an episode which could be paralleled in their Bible, the Homeric poems.

The character of Darius Hystaspes is graven in the rock-inscriptions of Behistan in Persia. He was not a vainglorious prince, but direct in speech. Fifty-four nations, as computed by Herodotus in another connection, at the least were subdued by Persia by that time, and a petty nation like the Athenians in those days would scarcely have disturbed the equanimity of Darius. He is one of the greatest kings in history, one who organised a vast empire,

whilst the conduct ascribed to him by Herodotus on a trivial occasion is unworthy of a renowned warrior and statesman. He was a man of majestic dignity, and his profound wisdom was stamped on the institutions he created. It is in this same spirit Æschylus conceives the character of Darius in his drama, "The Persæ." In the eyes of discerning critics, Darius added fresh laurels to his fame on reorganising the Ionian cities. He waived his personal preferences and abolished despotism. Democratic governments were set up by him in the conquered cities. He accommodated the forms of government to the character of the people. His genius for wise and constructive statesmanship was consummate, approximating to that of Napoleon. Thus "the epic handling" of Herodotus gives a factitious importance to Athens, and is repugnant to the known character of Darius.

To resume the story: By way of reprisals, the Persians sack the Ionian cities in 501 B.C., and in 497 B.C. finally enslave, as Herodotus spitefully expresses it, Ionia for the third time. In 492 B.C. the storm bursts again. Darius, perpetually urged by the Pisistratidæ and reminded by his slave all these years, determined to subdue the Greeks who had refused him earth and water. He

appointed Datis and Artaphernes to the command of the forces and directed them most particularly to conquer Eretria and Athens. A conqueror flushed with success over other Greek States would hardly have made huge preparations for two years to overcome two small States and was not likely to mis-estimate their strength. If he really entrusted the expedition to two of his generals and did not take the field in person, it follows he did not hold the Athenians of much account. The demanding of earth and water in token of submission is a practice to which Firdausi, a high authority on the customs of those days, is a stranger, and if earth and water were really demanded, as Herodotus would have us believe, it might not have been a Persian king who sent round heralds with the message. Further, Herodotus, who is garrulous enough when dealing with the army of Xerxes, passes over the numbers of troops engaged on either side. This may signify that the affair was of no great importance, and Mahaffy actually minimises the importance of the battle of Marathon, supposed to have been fought in 490 B.C. The omission of Herodotus is supplied by later historians, who are "loose and boastful asserters" and give four different sets of figures quoted by Grote. A further question

is, are the motives ascribed to Darius for waging the war adequate? For eleven years, we are to assume, Darius was being goaded into the war against the Athenians! Why did he require so much importunity? His resentment would have cooled down after so many years had elapsed. He was certainly absorbed in the cares of organisation, and would hardly have paused or turned aside to hunt an obscure nation in the midst of such arduous and colossal toils.

This is not all. Military experts have confessed their inability to construct any intelligible battle-piece from the sketch given by Herodotus. Some of their objections are, that the position of either army at Marathon is not clearly indicated, that the disposition of Greek troops is perfunctorily described, and of the Persian troops ignored; that there is no mention of the Persian cavalry; that there were delays in delivering attacks not accounted for. Rawlinson, in his translation of Herodotus, likewise shows up some glaring inconsistencies in the description of Herodotus. Grote does not deny the deficiencies of it, and contrasts them with the circumstantial statements of the same historian on the subject of the expeditions of Xerxes. Some military historians and Rawlinson strive to make good the defects and to eke out the narrative

with their own conjectures. It is far more reasonable to cast aside the whole account as unworthy of credence. A false narrative does not hang together and betrays itself usually in details. If Herodotus did not draw upon his imagination, his informants must have.

Nothing can be more grotesque than the incidents tacked on by Herodotus to the invasion of Xerxes. The battles of Thermopylæ and Salamis were fought in 480 B.C., and Platæa and Mycale in 479 B.C. Xerxes was at first disinclined to war with Greece, but his cousin Mardonius, the Kings of Thessaly, and Pisistratidæ, interpose and overcome his disinclination. He is wavering till the last, but he had three dreams on successive nights. The third dream nerves him to the resolve of subduing Greece. Thus Xerxes had no *casus belli* to start with, and embarks upon a perilous enterprise merely at the suggestion of dreams. We should have expected much more solid reasons for such a beginning—human actions are not motiveless — but apparently the word of Herodotus, a man who lived in the twilight of Greek civilisation, is quite sufficient for the modern classicists. Herodotus piously meditates, that it was the pleasure of the gods who wished to humiliate the Persian

Empire (at the hands of the chosen people of God)!

There are other violent improbabilities in the evolution of the plot, but they present no obstacle to the critical and mature judgment of Grote, which discards the "intrinsic negative probabilities" in favour of "positive testimony." Looking to the position of Herodotus and the age in which he was born, the positive testimony is of the flimsiest. Xerxes, so we read, ordered the Straits to be scourged with 300 lashes in his wrath, because the bridge of boats was ruined by a storm. He also heaped insulting terms on the rebellious Hellespont. Grote does not even boggle at this twaddle, but goes on to speak of sacrifices offered to rivers and the primitive beliefs of mankind. The whole of the childish proceeding smacks strongly of Greek superstition, as also the libations which Xerxes is said to have poured out. Either proceeding was impossible on the part of Xerxes, considering the enlightenment and religious ideals of the Achemenian Persians.

Darius Hystaspes, the father of Xerxes, has incidentally carved his profession of faith in rocks which blazon forth the praises of Ahura-Mazda. Thus we have ineffaceable evidence, that the sublime conception of an all-wise, all-governing, beneficent Providence illumined the

religious life of Persia before the days of Xerxes. Persia had by that date travelled miles away from the degraded conception of snarling, sensual, and irrational gods worshipped by the Greeks. Her religious ideas soared far above the heads of the Greeks and must have been incomprehensible to the latter. It is therefore a certainty that the absurd incidents which, Grote confesses, were derided by scholars before him, were a pure invention of the Greeks.

In one place, Grote gives away his case completely. The expedition of Xerxes, he says, is ushered in with an unusual solemnity of religious and poetical accompaniment, so that the Seventh Book of Herodotus reminds us in many points of the Second Book of the Iliad. The dream sent by the gods to frighten Xerxes and the ample catalogue of nations and eminent individuals have their precedents in the Iliad. The religious idea that the godhead is jealous and hostile to excessive good fortune or immoderate desires in man is inwoven into Herodotus's history of Xerxes as the main cause of the disgraceful termination. The gist of the refutation is, that the man, who sits down to compose a history on the model of an epic poem and is obsessed with a moral purpose, would not scruple to sacrifice truth and distort facts to

suit his theories. From whichever point of view the egregious tale of the five battles is envisaged, it turns out to be an elaborate concoction.

Herodotus was not even an eye-witness of the scenes he has painted. The date of his birth is supposed to be 484 B.C., that is, he was four years old when the battles of Mycale and Platæa took place. Let those who have a fervent faith in the chronicler have, if they choose, the crumb of comfort, that he might have been hoodwinked by his informants. The Athenians and their allies were in those days too contemptible, too insignificant States for a mighty Empire to measure its strength against. The very notion that Xerxes spent four years in preparation and hurled myriads of men against such puny adversaries is preposterous, but doubtless has for that very reason increased, as they expected, their importance in the estimation of those who claim to be inheritors of Greek culture. Herodotus, banished from his native land, settled in Athens, and owed an immense debt to the citizens for their kindnesses. He repaid that debt with interest, by singing their praises in a prose epic.

The heavy artillery of arguments and a remorseless logic does not stop here. There is the independent and external evidence of

books, supplying a further charge of ammunition. The Arabic and Persian histories may be rummaged in vain for any the slightest reference to the five battles. The Moslem writers are, as explained in the last section, by no means tender to the memory of the ancient Persians. They evince no compassion for the unfortunate Darius Codomanus who, having lost his kingdom, deserves some sympathy, and they even shower vituperation on him. Alexander the Great, who vanquished him, holds a high place in their affections, because he came to be identified with a mysterious personage, Dhu'l-Quaranayn, mentioned in the Koran. Hence no feelings of delicacy could have deterred the Oriental writers from relating at length the preparations of Xerxes and the defeats he sustained. They keenly relish the drum and trumpet style of history, and would not have missed the opportunity, if they had any warrant in their authorities. Again, the Pehlavi records which they ransacked for their purposes have not omitted the disasters inflicted on Persia by her Touranian foes and the rule of foreign dynasties over Persia. These would not, therefore, have slurred over invasions which were repelled, over rebuffs suffered by Persia. The position is simply reduced to this, that the two formidable invasions must be relegated to the realm of

fiction, or at the most regarded as insignificant skirmishes on the outskirts of the Empire, the shock of which was not felt at the centre, and attracted no notice.

In his strictures on the Greek accounts of the two Persian invasions, Bury in his "History of Greece" is immeasurably superior to Grote. With admirable judgment and with something of the French lucidity of mind, he lays bare all the flaws and absurdities involved in those accounts. But at the last moment he runs away from the only logical conclusion to be drawn, which is not very surprising.

A kindred nation, the Romans, in order to cloak one of the earliest and greatest disasters of Rome, invented the fable of Horatius Cocles keeping at bay the whole Etruscan army under Lars Porsena. It would not be surprising if the victories of Marathon, &c., were similarly designed to cover disgrace to Grecian arms. Even assuming that the Greeks scored some trifling successes, considerable deductions will have to be made. Heeren says, and so does Grote, after Herodotus, that all conquered nations were obliged to participate in the great campaigns waged by Persian kings, and that the invasions of Greece were incited by Greek intrigues. Darius was on the Greek hypothesis directly instigated

by the banished tyrant of Athens, Hippias, the son of Pisistratus. Freeman says, in Greek cities a party is constantly found in league with the enemy.

Hence the classical scholars, if they could correctly gauge the situation, instead of chuckling over these sordid affairs, would be ashamed of the doings of their idolised Greeks. That a motley crowd of mercenaries who could not have been very loyal were overpowered by determined patriots, would not so much redound to the credit of the Hellenic States, which were already a prey to corruption and ultimately perished from the disease Stasis, so well diagnosed by Aristotle. Professor Jackson is sceptical as to the battles having taken place, and that is the right attitude to adopt with reference to a one-sided version, which one has not thoroughly sifted for oneself.

Richardson, who has ably discussed in his preface to the Dictionary the five battles which have thrilled with pride the adorers of Greece, cogently advocates the views herein set forth. He is at home in Grecian history, and perhaps comes nearer the truth. His intuition is remarkable, and has almost anticipated the later researches of the nineteenth century. His verdict is, that the famous invasions were simply the move-

ments of the Satraps of Asia Minor to regulate or enforce the tribute which the Greeks might frequently be willing to neglect, or that some of the events might have been the descents of pirates or private adventurers, either with a view to plunder or retaliate some similar expedition of the Greeks, who appear to have been very early a race of freebooters extremely troublesome to the surrounding coasts. Richardson also reminds us that the largest Asiatic army which the Tartar conqueror, Chingiz Khan, more than 1600 years after Darius, could assemble, or which subsequently Tamerlane, with nearly all Asia prostrate at his feet, ever commanded, was 400,000 souls, and that the Greeks have simply inflated thousands into the millions who were supposed to have crossed the Hellespont with Xerxes. The maximum number of troops at Tamerlane's disposal was 800,000 men, who were dispersed in several divisions.

Richardson has no high opinion of classical historians, and perceives no reason to prefer them to the Eastern writers. He too noticed, before the profound scholarship of the last century had brought forth its best fruits, that Diodorus, Strabo, and Plutarch are themselves perplexed in their narratives and contradict the earlier writers, and that the

history of their own country, as outlined by them all, bristles with improbabilities. This last circumstance would make them much less trustworthy guides, when they come to deal with the histories of foreign nations.

III

The Character and Civilisation of the Ancient Persians compared with those of other Nations

THE Greeks are an overrated people, and because the classics have acquired an ascendency in European culture, extravagant eulogies are lavished on the obsolete authors and their works. Their contribution to civilisation is persistently magnified, and it is a net gain to sound scholarship that the boldest and most original thinker of the last century, Herbert Spencer, specially in his posthumous work, has once for all shattered the superstition of ages which has made of Greek and Latin culture a fetish in Europe. He has doubtless shocked those whose minds are enslaved to the classics, but in the view of impartial spectators the opinion of one who owed nothing to classical reading carries overwhelming force. If Greek learning was indispensable to modern civilisation or the positive stage, as the classicists are never weary of repeating, how is it the Byzantine civilisation, which never let the Greek learning fall into

disuse, has called forth anathemas from accomplished scholars?

In his "Principles of Ethics," Spencer condenses his estimate of the Greek qualities in a few pregnant sentences: "Marvellous are the effects of educational bias," he exclaims, and wonders at Gladstone's recommending Greek culture notwithstanding his familiarity with the doings of these people, guilty of so many atrocities, and characterised by such revolting cruelty of manners as Grote says, who were liars through all their grades from their gods down to their slaves, and whose religion was made up of gross and brutal superstitions. Spencer also cites Mahaffy, who declares Greek conduct to be characterised by treachery, and states that Darius thought a Greek who kept his word a notable exception. These considerations necessarily depress heavily the evidentiary value of the classical documents whose writers, to add to their disqualifications, were inspired by the hate of Persia and things Persian.

Spencer's detestation of the Greeks and their ways is no empty formula. He escaped coming under the spell of their works at an early age as the classicists do, and his judgment was not warped by the false glamour which surrounds them. It is the special privilege of the classicists to laud Greek ideas and

sentiments, however repellent. The artistic perfection of form and beauty of diction, which in conventional language are to be found in the Greek masterpieces, carry the enthusiast off his feet and hide the true Greek character from him. The ordinary classicists and the ordinary Orientalists, who are nurtured on the Greek language, have imbibed their prejudices against Asiatic or Persian civilisation from a perusal of Greek works. They outdo the Greeks themselves; the high opinion the Greeks had of the ancient Persians in certain respects is not duly appreciated, and the fictitious glories of Marathon and Salamis are uppermost in their minds. Greek faults are glozed over with a blind perversity. It is true, a perusal of Greek works affords of itself no insight into the Greek character, and the ordinary classicist is prone to estimate the average type by the genius of a few, who adorn Greek art and literature. Mahaffy, who has surveyed Greek civilisation in several books, has torn aside the veil of secrecy and exhibited the Greek foibles in their naked ugliness. These are detailed here and ought to be emphasised in the interests of truth and science.

Mahaffy premises that the Greek character remained unchanged during the whole period of their history. In the Homeric age, the

Greek society was exceptionally backward and savage, but its characteristics are beside the purpose of this book. One has to note the constant occurrence of cruelty in the Golden Age of Greece and also subsequently. Slaves were tortured when required to give evidence, and in war prisoners were put to death in cold blood. Continuous and barbarous punishment of slaves was the order of the day. The public Assembly at Athens once voted death to the whole male population of Mitylene, numbering 5000. The vote was afterwards rescinded, and in the end 1000 ringleaders were executed according to Thucydides. In the Thirty Years' War, the Plataean prisoners were executed with atrocities. The Romans, too, were equally guilty of atrocities in their warfare, and in their treatment of slaves, criminals, prisoners, and even captive kings. Niebuhr, in his ignorant and violent views of Asiatic history, pretends that only Eastern nations have committed cruelties. He turns a blind eye to the barbarities of the Greeks and Romans, and so do most classicists and historians of the West.

No less disagreeable and shocking than the cruelty of the Greeks, was the ingrained grasping and jealousy of the Greek natives, manifested in their politics, both domestic and foreign. Piracy was looked on as ad-

venturous rather than criminal. No Greek state would have felt the smallest twinge of conscience at permitting pirates to make a descent upon a near or unfriendly city. No non-Hellenic State had any right against Greek aggression and Greek rapacity. Aliens, who had most of the trade in their hands and managed most of the banks, were treated with perfidy in Athens. On the occasion of a scarcity in Piræus, the corn-merchants, who were respectable foreigners, were plundered. The kindness of Greeks was limited to friends and family, and included no chivalry to foes or helpless slaves who were actually several times more numerous than the citizens.

The old men, even those to whom the Greeks owed their greatness, were cast aside with contempt, when they were past useful work. The jury system worked badly; the defendants did not obtain a hearing in many cases, and the jury decided without hearing both sides of the case. Polybius, who wrote after Greece was subjected to Rome, contrasts the dishonesty and peculations of Greeks employed in public offices with the integrity of the Romans in the same situation. The Greeks, we may properly conclude, had only a superficial veneer of civilisation.

Mahaffy does not give a good certificate to the Romans also. What was in their favour was regularity, method, and discipline in the national life, but murdering and ruthless plundering were practised. After the last Macedonian war, every kind of vice and luxury were cultivated with extravagant cost. Generosity of character, especially as to money, was nil. Arnold says, in Rome there was violence and injustice and cruelty and falsehood and treachery towards foreigners. The Rome which came in contact with Persia was the Imperial Rome of the third and fourth centuries A.D., not the Republican Rome which boasted some virtues.

What was the character of the Romans under the Empire? Merivale's estimate is sufficiently instructive. Callous ferocity of disposition was general, distinguishing the Roman society from the highest to the lowest. The cruelty of women vied with that of men. Sensuality in its most degrading forms pervaded all classes. The principal vices of the great were meanness and servility, the pursuit of money by every artifice and compliance; they had little of the sense of honour. The Quæstor or Prætor set himself to amass a fortune without regard to duty or humanity. Tyranny was every Roman's birthright; slavery he believed to

be the eternal law of Nature. The poor were brutal, bloodthirsty, callous to the infliction of pain, familiar in daily life with cruelties which we shudder to think of. The corrupt morality of the age, infecting all ranks and classes, was above all at the bottom of the patient endurance of tyranny which signalised the Roman Empire. A constant variety of amusements, extravagant shows, massacres in the Circus, and distribution of largesses, were provided to wean the people from attachment to public affairs. Every Roman was armed, whilst the military force at the immediate disposal of the Emperor was of a trifling description. Yet these same Romans, whom some modern writers beslaver with so much adulation, would not rise and smite down their oppressors. No Eastern nation, which has been in the van of civilisation, has ever fallen so low. These nations never had a chance of turning on their oppressors, in the same way that the Russian revolutionaries of to-day are helpless against an organised bureaucracy buttressed up by a standing army. At all events, the Romans under the Empire could always recall the traditions of their commonwealth, which had not died out, and had some constitutional weapons ready to hand if they desired to overturn

the despotism. A Republican form of government, or any form other than tribal or despotic, did not, from various causes, dawn upon the Eastern nations, who were consequently much less to blame than the Romans.

In shining contrast with the Greek and Roman characters, stands out that of the Persians as delineated by Herodotus, Aeschylus, Xenophon, Plato, and Strabo. Praise from such quarters is praise indeed. They present a glowing picture of that nation's courage, stubbornness and tenacity in fight, *élan*, dash, energy, love of truth, fidelity to promise, their generosity, free and open speech, their warm-hearted geniality and hospitality, their lightness and sprightliness of character. The Persians readily gave shelter to the enemy who asked it, and generally treated their prisoners of war with much tenderness. In the matter of eating and drinking, they were noted for their temperate habits and sobriety. Following the aforesaid writers, Rawlinson adds: "Persian kings entrapped into a promise stood to it firmly; foreign powers had never to complain that treaties were departed from. The Persians thus form an honourable exception to the ordinary Asiatic character, and for general truthfulness and a faithful performance of their engagements compare

favourably with the Greeks and Romans." The Persians were passionately fond of hunting, riding, and all athletic exercises. These people, for all their progress in the arts of government and architecture and their reputed works in science and philosophy, Gibbon and Grote vilify as barbarians, though the term Barbaroi employed by Greeks conveyed no manner of reproach, and simply denoted a foreigner, or collectively non-Hellenes. The chief faults, which Rawlinson has been able to unearth, are the addiction of the Persians to self-indulgence and luxury, unrestrained demonstrations of grief and joy, inordinate solicitude for personal appearance and adornments, and a tameness and subservience in all their relations with the king. The royal court and its surroundings and manners furnish some repulsive features, if the Greeks are to be believed, but perhaps they had no first-hand knowledge of its mysteries as of the common people.

Mahaffy makes some pertinent observations on the Persian character. Xenophon's "Anabasis," which describes the expedition in 401 B.C. of the younger Cyrus, a pretender to the throne of Persia, and the adventures and hardships of the Greek mercenaries whom he had engaged, exhibits the brother of the Persian king in enchanting aspects.

His perfect good faith, his magnetic personality, his abilities and ascendency over the vain Greeks, and his good fellowship, won Xenophon's encomiums. He was an average specimen, we may take it, especially when we throw in Plutarch's testimony also. Xenophon's "Cyropædeia," a treatise on the education of Cyrus the Great, has puzzled commentators. The "Cyropædeia" is a sort of historical romance, and the pith of the two books of Xenophon read together, so far as it is relevant to the matter in hand, may be best extracted in the words of Mahaffy. Xenophon found that the Persians were, in their nobler specimens, in splendour of ideas and richness of life, far superior to anything that Greece could produce, and were equal to the most polished Greeks. Xenophon also discovered among the Persians his ideal sovereign, and his portrait of Cyrus bodies forth the ideal. Xenophon, be it stated, served under the younger Cyrus, a fact which enhances the value of his opinions, and was not at the mercy of informants. It may be further gathered from his books, that greatness was traditional and natural to the Persians, with a chivalry and generosity foreign to Greek ideas. These very traits will be independently confirmed in Section V. of this book. The splendour in

war of the Persian nobles and their sporting proclivities are likewise perpetuated in the Great Sarcophagus of the Kings of Sidon.

We may now contemplate the two portraits, the Greek and Persian, in juxtaposition. Taking the old Greek at his best and laying aside his iniquities for the nonce, the æsthetic sense was developed in him in a high degree, but perhaps for that very reason his character was ill-balanced. No generous impulses surged within his breast, and the fount of sympathetic emotions was dried up at its source. He had illimitable egotism and overweening selfishness. He disdained to learn anything from other nations. His intense concentration within the narrow compass of his ideas, interests, sympathies, feelings, and duties, and the resulting consentaneousness of sentiment through the Hellenic society, made possible the perfection of Greek art and literary performances within their circumscribed grooves. The literary efforts of the Greeks wearied and disgusted the encyclopædic mind of Spencer, and he was also of opinion that the absence of the handful of Latin and Greek books would have made no difference to the world's progress. There were no permanent elements in the Greek civilisation. Its

narrow ideals, whether in politics or literature, were soon attained, and the resources of the Hellenic intellect were exhausted after that. There was no fresh breath of life from outside to stir up that civilisation, and a rapid blight fell over it. The Greek culture came only on the top of other vivifying influences in modern Europe, and the Renaissance owed more to the commercial, industrial, and other practical activities of Europe in the fifteenth century, than to the mere importation of Greek learning and books. The very diversity of elements in the modern civilisation is a guarantee of its vitality and is somewhat of a hindrance to artistic perfection.

Compared with the Greeks, the Persians had far more solid qualities, and there was a seriousness of purpose and steadfastness in their composition. They had dignity and refinement, though not a raging sensibility to the beautiful or instability. They early offered submission to high moral laws imposed by a religious reformer, and evolved wise customs and institutions, as acknowledged even by Herodotus. The inroads of barbarians submerged monuments of their literary and artistic activity to a great extent; not that they were not skilful with their pens. Despotism doubtless exercised its

baneful effects, and whilst degrading the subjects, must have reacted on the despots, who, here and there, trampled under foot rights and the moral laws. Yet, perhaps, the safety of a nation, ruling over a host of others, best lay in government by one man. At any rate in Persia there was no intolerance of foreigners, and in all that makes for worth and elevation and strength of character, the Persians were vastly superior to the Greeks.

The Hellenising of Asia, which Freeman thought entered into Alexander's designs, and which Freeman considers Alexander's chief title to fame, would have been an unmitigated calamity to the world. Hellenising meant barbarous exclusiveness, a contempt for the rights of humanity masked by a thin coating of outward polish. Alexander accomplished no lasting political changes, and he is a hero in the eyes of Freeman and a few more modern writers. Chance and circumstances favoured him; there was no commander of first-rate ability to oppose him in the East, except the naval commander Memnon of Rhodes, who kept him at bay until his death. If Darius III. had had a tithe of the ability, military and political, of Darius I., he could have united the smaller Greek States against the Macedonian, or else annihilated

his armies by standing on the defensive, and for ever ended his dreams of conquest and desolation. His insanity, begotten of sottishness and boundless conceit, which impelled Alexander to slay his own friends, to dye his hands with the innocent blood of the inhabitants of whole towns, and to pose as a divinity and believe in his own godhead, does not revolt the modern worshippers, but appears to them a profound stroke of policy or wisdom. Judgments on Greek history are often of this type in some modern books —characters are whitewashed, provided the Asiatics do not get their due.

During the greater part of its career, the Sassanian Empire was pitted against the Byzantine, which was founded by Constantine in A.D. 328–30. On the latter empire, judgment has been pronounced by competent critics. They have poured vials of scathing condemnation on the Byzantine civilisation, and here are a few samples of the judgment. Lecky, in his "History of European Morals," gives it as the universal verdict of history that the Byzantine is the most thoroughly base and despicable form that civilisation has yet assumed, and that the Byzantine Empire was pre-eminently the age of treachery. The history of the empire, he continues, is a monotonous story of the intrigues of priests,

eunuchs, and women; of poisonings, of conspiracies, of uniform ingratitude, of perpetual fratricides. Voltaire calls the Byzantine history a repertory of declamations and miracles disgraceful to the human mind. Hegel says: "The history of this highly civilised Eastern Empire—where as we might suppose the spirit of Christianity could be taken up in its truth and purity—exhibits to us a millennial series of uninterrupted crimes, weaknesses, basenesses, and want of principle." The ultra-Catholic De Maistre has it: "Ransack universal history, nowhere can you find a dynasty more wretched. Either feeble or furious, or both at the same time, these insupportable princes turned their demented interests on the side of theology, of which their disposition took possession to overthrow." The relations of the Byzantine and Sassanian Empires make up a considerable chapter in the history of both, and with the above deliverances to guide us, we shall be able to formulate some definite conclusions in judging between them and their quarrels.

Latterly, even the Byzantine civilisation has been championed by some historians as a power for good and a great blessing; one might say, any movement or any cause of bygone times within the confines of Europe, however reprehensible, can enlist on its side

champions in these days. I am not widely read in the Byzantine histories, but what I understand is, that the Byzantine Empire is to be extolled because it (1) was a bulwark of Europe against Asiatic danger, and (2) kept alive Greek learning within its borders. The fall of Constantinople set free Greek professors to roam over Europe and to assist in the propagation of Greek learning, which, in the eyes of later ages of Europe, was a most happy event. That being so, the retarding of that auspicious capitulation of Constantinople was most unfortunate. Consistency demands such a line of reasoning. The second point can only be accounted a service, if everybody is agreed that Greek culture was absolutely essential to the modern revival.

That the Byzantine Empire preserved the idea of the Roman Empire is a merit in the eyes of Bury. Universal dominion, and specially such as Rome exercised, is more harmful than good, and the idea itself became ridiculous when the last Byzantine emperor, though ruling over a single city, described himself as the lawful successor of the masters of the world. Two more points are made by Finlay and Bury in favour of the effete, decayed, and aged Empire, but none of the more recent writers give heed to them, nor do I see their importance.

However the matter may be argued, the admissions of the stoutest apologists for the Byzantine history are germane to the polemical drift of this book. Oman, who follows, in his volume in the "Story of the Nations," Finlay and Bury, two of the latest apologists, reproaches the Byzantine Empire with the practice of a grovelling court etiquette, the introduction of slaves and eunuchs into high offices of state, and the wholesale and deliberate use of treachery and lying in matters of diplomacy. What interests a student of Persian history is not so much the internal condition of the Greek Empire, as its intercourse with the Sassanian Empire.

Nöldeke, in his article in the Encyclopædia, which he has since amplified into a book, places the decadent Roman and the Byzantine civilisations on a high pedestal, and on a loftier plane than the Sassanian. The moral condition of the Pagan Empire of Rome is, we are told by one authority, one of the most appalling pictures on record. The imperial system of Rome, the institution of slavery, and the gladiatorial shows, have no counterparts in the coeval Persian kingdom; these had the most disastrous effects in lowering the tone of the Roman society. The apotheosis of rulers was impossible in a state which glorified the one Ruler of the Universe.

The classes, the gradations of rank, which the Persian kings arranged and re-arranged, were not differentiated from slaves, and there is no trace of slavery in the Persian institutions. The Avestaic texts steer clear of its abominations,—a sure sign that slavery was unknown in those days. The cruel games of Rome were peculiar to the nation inhabiting it. Lecky acutely dissects the Byzantine civilisation in these words: "It was very cruel and very sensual; there have been times when cruelty assumed more ruthless and sensuality more extravagant aspects; but there has been no other enduring civilisation so absolutely destitute of all the forms and elements of greatness, and none to which the epithet *mean* may be so emphatically applied. Without patriotism, without the fruition or desire of liberty, after the first paroxysms of religious agitation, without genius or intellectual activity, slaves and willing slaves in both their actions and their thoughts, immersed in sensuality and in the most frivolous pleasures, the people only emerged from their listlessness, when some theological subtilty, or some rivalry in chariot races, stimulated them into frantic riots."

Only a brainless charlatan can call the Persian, or any even decent and mediocre civilisation, inferior to these dregs of the Roman intellectualism. Apparently, a German

professor, who writes on Persian history, is dispensed from the obligation of studying or understanding expert opinions on periods of European history, of which he so glibly talks.

In the Sassanian Empire, the moral perceptions of the ruling nation were not dimmed, nor were their intellectual faculties blunted or paralysed. The Sassanian Persians have not found any biographers, as the Achemenians had. The Byzantine, Armenian, and Syrian writers of the period, whilst denouncing Zoroastrianism and the persecution of Christian sectaries by Persian kings, have not laid to the door of the people any charges of viciousness or immorality, which they would have been too ready to rake up in their hostility to all creeds outside the pale of Christianity. The lapse of centuries and the national depression following on Alexander's conquest would have naturally had some effect. Yet there is no reason to fancy that the innate qualities of the Achemenian Persians underwent any sensible change for the worse in the Sassanian. Whatever the Christian historians may have indited, and notwithstanding the clamour of some modern writers, the Sassanian kings, with perhaps some rare exceptions, practised a broad-minded toleration. The Jewish Scriptures are effusive in their panegyrics of some of the Achemenian Persian kings

who had dealings with the Jews. Milman, in his notes on Gibbon's History, quotes from two Jewish historians, who eulogise for his tolerance Ardeshir Babekân. Yet many modern writers pertinaciously cling to the delusion, that he it was who gave the lead in Sassanian persecutions. Besides, Mazdayasnism was never a missionary religion, and though a state religion under the Sassanides, did not spread beyond Persian proper. This last fact ought to silence all objectors; it proclaims a deep, abiding spirit of toleration. The story of Christian persecutions is gone into in Section VI. of this book. Lecky has dedicated a number of luminous pages, in his "History of European Morals," to an instructive and profound study into the causes of the very exceptional fanaticism and animosity directed against the early Christians of the Roman Empire—which empire exercised the widest toleration from the days of Augustus downwards. What is stated in this book on the political significance of the question is borne out by him.

At one time, it used to be taught that the Pagan literature of antiquity was the prime cause of the Renaissance in modern Europe. Mechanical inventions, the ferment of industrial life, commercial enterprises, geographical discoveries, political improvements, and the con-

quests of nature, have been latterly admitted to an equal rank, and there is at least one writer whom I have come across, who has mentioned in the same breath the Mahomedan Schools of Science. Rénan assigns the Hispano-Arab philosophy and studies a high place in the history of civilisation, by reason of their influence on Christian Europe. But for these scientific studies, there would have been probably no Renaissance; and the Pagan literature would not have, by itself, been an instrument of intellectual emancipation. That literature made only pedants and dilettante triflers of the Byzantine students who had no tincture of science, and perhaps riveted the chains of servitude round their necks. The waning of the theological influence which barred the way to spiritual advances, in the preparation of the Renaissance went on concurrently with the encroachments of the positive spirit. The thesis here sought to be enforced is that, through the Moslem sciences, the pedigree of the Renaissance extends back to the Sassanian era of culture. The Moslem learning was an offshoot of the Sassanian erudition; it was a continuation of those traditions.

The constituents of the Sassanian culture were wonderfully varied and have not been hitherto studied. The romance and tales are

peculiarly a product of the Persian genius. They were a genre unknown to the Latin and Greek races of Europe. The learned author of the Fihrist (A.D. 988) remarks that the ancient Persians were the first to invent tales; and that the Achemenians, and after them the Sassanians, had a special part in the development of this literature, which found Arabic translators and was edited and imitated by Arabic literati. History was cultivated from the days of the Achemenians, if not earlier, and the name of the Dehkan Danishwar is associated with the recension of the Persian annals projected in the reign of Yezdegird, the last king of the Sassanian dynasty. Mathematicians and accountants were in high favour at the Sassanian court. The kings laid great stress on a proper, honest, and regular system of public accounts, and the finance department was carefully nursed and managed, ever since Darius Hystaspes consolidated the revenues of Persia. After the Arab invasion, it continued to be conducted on the same lines, so much so that even the Persian language and notation were employed in connection with account-keeping till A.D. 700. Thus the Arabs took their first steps, under the tuition of the Sassanian Persians, in mathematical lore which they afterwards developed.

The induction of Moslems into other sciences, which they handed on to Europe, was the work of the school at Jundi-Shahpoor, which was instituted by Chosroës I. or Naushirwan in A.D. 550, for the pursuit of philosophical and medical studies. Instruction was there imparted in Greek sciences, and the school flourished even into Abbasid times. The Bait-ûl-Hikmat, the academy founded by Khalif Mamun in Baghdad, which became a famous seat of Moslem learning, was a replica of that flourishing school. Thus the Moslems of the Middle Ages lighted their lamp from the sacred fires of learning, which the Sassanian monarchs had kept burning.

The bilingual inscriptions of the Sassanians are a memento, that the Greek language was understood and diffused in the Persian Empire. The Persian and Greek Empires were constantly engaged in robbing and severing provinces, one from the other, and hence there must have been several bilingual provinces within both the Empires. Further, translations from Sanscrit and Greek were executed under the orders of Naushirwan. The Sassanian culture was more catholic and wider than the Greek in that way. From Naushirwan's taste for philosophic argumentation and his kindly reception of the Neo-Platonist sages, we can also deduce that

the Persians were seriously occupied with philosophic studies before the accession of Naushirwan. Besides, the state religion was itself impregnated with a philosophy of its own, and the priestly hierarchy could not have neglected, without dereliction of duty, the theories bound up with its truth and validity. The dualism of that religion did not stand alone, but was perpetually challenged by the monotheism, nominal or real, of other prominent creeds of the day. Without any pressure from outside, there was an internal development, and different schools arose, labouring to subsume the dualism under a higher unity, space, boundless time, infinite light, or fate. The speculative faculty of the Persians was not quiescent in the presence of the never-ending problem of evil which was brilliantly attacked by their religion, and any solution of which is at best tentative and beset with difficulties. Indeed, it is the fate of all profound systems of philosophy that the disciples are seldom unanimous with regard to the interpretation of the words of the master or the logical corollaries to be deduced therefrom. One German translator of the Avesta has compared the Zoroastrian dualism with the Hegelian sublated dualism, and some have gone so far as to make the latter system a

descendant from the former, throu
gnostics and Jacob Boehme. Its i
truth is such that J. S. Mill, in his "Ess
Religion," towards the close of his be
career, passing in review revealed religi
theism, took refuge and solace in the re
that the one form of belief in the super
which stands wholly clear both of inte
contradiction and moral obliquity
which regards nature and life as the
of a struggle between contriving goodn
intractable material or a Principle
Modern science plumes itself upon the
sion of the realm of order into the
ments of nature, and it is worthy of n
parts of the Avesta harp in a poetic stra
the order and law observable in the
mena of the universe.

Buddhism, another philosophic relig
impinged on Persian thought dur
Sassanian period. Mani (A.D. 216–27
was considered the father of a he
Christians, and was a Persian subject.
book Shabûrkân cited by Al Biruni
Buddha among the three messengers
who had been commissioned before h
borrowed his ascetic principles a
doctrine of metempsychosis from tha
sage, and in his turn passed on som
practical devices and tenets to M

Laws and jurisprudence, codification, and a pure administration of justice, were among the hobbies of Sassanian kings; probably they consecrated more of their efforts to law and finance than to any other branches of government.

Political and moral treatises, commonly ascribed to some of the Sassanian kings, were widely distributed even in Mahomedan Persia. Both Arabic and Persian chroniclers have diligently quarried these materials, and are very pleased with their labours, which have resulted in profuse quotations. Not a few of the apophthegms are shrewd, and show a penetrating knowledge of human nature. Economic doctrines and social philosophy are also at times embedded in some of the longer addresses. Gibbon and Malcolm have cited a few admiringly. Mohl refers to two treatises in Armenian, entitled the "Wisdom of Naushirwan." So far, we can speak with positive assurance on the scholarship and learning of the Sassanian epochs. Pehlavi books, the Dinkard, and one or two others, have tabulated the contents of the Avesta, of which less than a twentieth fraction has come down. The lost portions dealt with medicine, geography, sanitation, hygiene, zoology, botany, astronomy and philosophy. The Persian chronology and calendar, as set out by Al Biruni

(A.D. 973–1048), were based on astronomical observations, and there were feasts and festivals which required the Persians to measure the motions of celestial bodies for religious and political purposes. Darius I. had deputed Scylax to circumnavigate Arabia from the Indus to the Red Sea, and, so early as that, the Persians were not unmindful of geography at least.

Lastly, the Persians trained under the Sassanian régime were the instructors of the rude and unlettered Arabs in the arts of government. Al-Fakhri has a passage telling us how Omar, the khalif and ruler of the Moslem world who was among the first to communicate its momentum to the conquering spirit of Islam, in A.D. 636 learnt the rudiments of the science of government from a Persian Marzaban, *i.e.* a member of the official hierarchy under the Sassanides, and under his tutorship established the divâns or government departments. The Saracenic style of architecture probably commenced as an imitation of the Sassanian architecture which is its groundwork. In engineering and building, the Sassanian Persians were not behindhand. The Sassanian kings built resplendent palaces and public edifices. Further, Naushirwan, to keep out or intimidate barbarous frontier tribes, had thrown across the Caspian a huge

wall, which was standing at least for four hundred years, till 332 A.H., at which date Masoudi testifies to its existence. The Persians were skilful builders and architects at those dates, and they were so from the days of the Achemenides.

Very little is known if painting flourished in ancient Persia. The declaration of Mani's mission is thought by Moslem writers to have coincided with a revival of painting and arts, and it is within the bounds of possibility that drawing, painting, and the allied arts co-existed with the plastic which has erected some lasting monuments. The painting or any graphic representation of human figures and animals is an offence in the sight of the Moslem Allâh, and it was far easier for the fanatical invaders to smash paintings than anything else, if such paintings had been treasured up by the Sassanians. Persia has, of course, always been famous for her decorative arts and weaving, &c.

The Sassanian civilisation, we see from the above analysis, was compounded of many precious ingredients. In the Achemenian culture, there had been a confluence of the streams from Assyria, Chaldea, and the surrounding countries of the East. In the Sassanian period, these were augmented by tributaries from Greece and India; and alto-

gether the Sassanian culture was far richer in substance and power than the Greek and Latin learning. It was the parent of the Moslem learning, which ennobled the transition period before the Renaissance and imparted its richness and variety to the modern revival. What was the state of the sciences, at what precise point the Sassanian culture left off, what positive additions it made to the stock of human knowledge, it is impossible to determine. Biruni and Fihrist, Tabari, Dinawari, Masoudi and others, had occasion to compile or mention lists of Pehlavi books which helped them or were within their knowledge, but with a few exceptions the Sassanian literature has not been recovered. The very language died out under the rule of the Arabs. There is nothing inherently improbable in the story that Omar gave orders to commit to the flames books in the Persian and Egyptian libraries. The Arab in those days despised letters and could have had no appreciation of books. To facilitate conversions, and to rivet the yoke of subjugation more firmly, in furtherance of a fanatical policy, books and traditions must have been burnt. The disorders and distractions of the conquered people in Persia must have been indescribable, when even religious texts inscribed on cowhides were wiped out of the memory even of those believing in them.

The Moslems in their intellectual heyday were not very original, and it is not unlikely that their main lines of development were chalked out for them when they took over the heritage of the Sassanian Empire. The chain of proof is complete. There is an organic connection between the Sassanian culture and the Saracenic; and the Saracenic had its important share in the modern revival. Long before that revival, the Greek and Roman civilisations were extinct, though they were filtering through devious channels. It was the living forces of the times which resuscitated the dormant energies of Europe, not languages forgotten and reposing between the covers of small volumes. Like everything else, the Greek and Roman civilisations have their appointed places in the orderly sequence of causes and events, but the ordinary historian accords them an undue pre-eminence, and especially the writers on Persian or Oriental history. These assume that the classics are at the bottom of everything that is good and noble in the achievements of humanity. These "matchless" masterpieces were the staple mental food of boys and youths of the western and eastern Roman Empires, and were written in the living languages of those times. With such enormous leverage, they yet failed, and failed grievously, to re-

kindle the flame of liberty which was shining brightly but the other day, as it were, for the Romans. It is an idle pretence, then, to say that their teachings fructified in the later ages in which the languages had to be painfully acquired, and that too, by a chosen few, who were seldom, if ever, at the helm of affairs.

The men of science have no such illusions as the classicists and the aforesaid fraternity of historians have, and are not hampered by any superstitious faith in the miraculous virtues of Greek and Roman works. In fact, rebellion against authority, especially against Aristotle's, was a condition of progress in the past. Bacon was the pioneer of modern science, and Descartes moved the lever of thought in the Western world. Of these, Descartes commenced by repudiating all authority, and Bacon by contemning Aristotle. Only a revolt against Ptolemy could pave the way for the foundation of modern astronomy. The French Revolution, a turning-point in modern history, was not inspired by Greek ideas, in fact ran counter to them, nor did the doctrine of evolution, which has revolutionised modern thought, issue from a laborious diving into Greek and Latin speculations. Oriental studies and the Oriental philosophies, on the other hand,

went to the making of the nineteenth century Pantheism, Pessimism and Dualism. German poets and thinkers were then imbued with Oriental learning, which is now part of a general culture. These observations will suffice to refute those who would thrust back the learning and wisdom of the East, or relegate it to the limbo of forgotten vanities, and force to the forefront Greek and Latin books.

It is interesting to explore the question, and the parable may be followed up. Of all countries in the world, Spain may be regarded as the battleground where the East and West met on equal terms. There a crucial experiment was performed by an aberrant chance, as it were, to test the rival merits, shorn of artificial and disturbing conditions, of the Eastern character and civilisation, and the Western. In fact, Christian Spain was in a more favourable position than the society it ousted; the belt of a new civilisation, more vigorous than any of its predecessors, girded it and buoyed it up. From A.D. 755 to 1491, the date of the fall of Granada, the Moors were masters of Spain. Under them, arts, sciences, and letters prospered exceedingly, and Cordova was the brightest jewel of the world. To Cordova flocked students from all parts of the world,

and men of learning foregathered to lay their offerings on the altar of the Muses. Grace, refinement, wit, and social charms diffused their fragrance in Andalusia; all this, when all around in Europe was impenetrable darkness, barbaric ignorance, and savage manners of the tenth and earlier and later centuries. With the fall of Granada, the sun of the Moorish power set for ever in Spain; and the glories of Cordova and Andalusia departed. The Spaniards enjoyed a transitory spell of borrowed effulgence after the Moors were banished, but the learning and arts never returned. Stagnation and cruelty, the inquisition, intellectual and industrial decay and superstition threw their black shadow, which still broods over what was once the foremost and fairest province in Europe; and the nation has taken a back seat in the councils of Europe. Yet the same Christian Spain participated in the Renaissance, *i.e.*, in the Greek and Latin learning, and all the ideas of liberty embalmed in the two dead languages. Where is the potency of that learning in this particular case? Is not the inference to be drawn then, that the Greek and Latin ideas fell in with the tendencies of the times in certain countries of Europe, and at the most, if at all, fanned the flame, not that they engendered those tendencies?

Without the presence of other co-operating factors, the Greek and Latin civilisations, appearing as two local groups of facts and fictions, printed in books, could have made no appeal to the intelligence of nations in their slumbers. The Spanish Moors had their failings and defects, but they displayed a far higher capacity for progress and civilisation than a Christian nation of the West, which at one time lorded over a considerable slice of Europe and colonies. The Moorish civilisation, it is plain, was an efflorescence produced by the fertilising head-waters of the Sassanian erudition.

The serenely impartial mind of Spencer was more and more impressed, as time wore on, by the early civilisations of the East. The under-valuation of the pre-classic progress and the conspicuous indebtedness of the Greeks to the civilisations which preceded them were borne in upon him, he confesses in his Autobiography, the more the ever-widening circle of his studies was pushed into those regions. Thus one of the most illustrious philosophers of Europe, not to speak of archæologists and specialists, has vindicated the claims of Eastern civilisation as the spring-head of the currents which have gathered into one main channel in these days.

IV

The Heroic Age of Persia

THE heroic age of Persia has given rise to much discussion, and still somewhat confused conceptions cluster round it. Professor Browne, assimilating the superficial and commonplace ideas of some critics of Persian history, avowedly regards the old Persian legends as entirely mythical, and Rawlinson is more dogmatic still. Rawlinson writes: "The best critics regard the 'Shahnameh' of Firdausi and the Chronicle of Mirkhond as pure romance, the events related as fictitious, and the personages as chiefly mythological." These dogmas are thoroughly unsound and unscientific.

Of course exaggeration is inseparable from a narrative transmitted orally for ages, which gathers accretions as it rolls along; but there is always a nucleus of truth inside it. Sir J. Malcolm, with his instinctive historical sense, has tried to feel after the truth, not without success. Two sets of facts disentangled by him are of special interest. The

national standard of Persia, the kâwyâni-darafsh, goes back in legend to the national revolt under Faridun against a usurping tyranny, and its capture by the Arabs in the battle of Quadasya in A.D. 636 is an incontrovertible fact. It had been preserved as a palladium of national power through all the dynastic changes, and encrusted with jewels by each generation of kings. It is natural that its history should have been handed down through successive ages. Hence Faridun and Kaweh were not "airy nothings," but were in the flesh once. These two names, like grains of crystal, solidify and give consistency to the whole story which surrounds them as mother liquor and makes a goodly bulk.

Another noteworthy fact is, that the chieftains of Seistan, who play an overshadowing rôle in the beginnings of the epic, were feudatories, defending the Persian throne and making and unmaking kings. The tangled skein of the main plot and under-plots is unravelled, if we proceed on such a supposition. Powerful nobles acting as king-makers, and titular sovereigns reduced to ciphers, are phenomena which can be matched in the history of many countries. The turbulent Sipehbeds of the Sassanian Empire were no mean substitutes for these legendary chief-

tains, and there was conscious or unconscious mimicry in their violence towards some of the unfortunate puppets they set up or pulled down. With the exit of the chieftains, Persian history becomes less poetical and merges into the authenticated records of other nations and Persia itself. So the two important sets of facts, taken in conjunction, reclaim a large tract for history from the splendid waste of poetic diction.

The charming poetic fancy of the ancient Persians has made of their history an entrancing recital. Its many-coloured rays, playing on the hard texture of facts, has suffused it with a glow which obscures from weak eyes the underlying sober reality. The ancient Persians, we gather, were fond of their kings and heroes, and have idealised in appropriate characters the virtues they most loved or esteemed. The reigns of some kings typify their progress in arts and civilisation. Thus the earliest dynasty is designated the Peshdadyans, because they distributed justice and perhaps erected tribunals to dispense justice. The first sovereign of the House reclaimed his people from a barbarous condition. Hoshung, a descendant of his, established the cult of fire-worship. Jamshid is credited with the invention of industrial arts, and we may take it that not he personally was the inventor, but

that inventors flourished in his reign. He likewise fixed the structure of Persian society on a fourfold division, and a classification, though not the identical one, found expression in the laws of Ardeshir Bâbekân, who reared the Sassanian Empire on the ruins of the Parthian kingdom. A common blacksmith, Kâweh, after whose leather apron the royal standard, the kâwyâni-darafsh, was named, hoisted the banner of revolt and restored the legitimate successor of Jamshid to the throne. How were these associations formed? By a mere effort of the imagination, as the advocates of a mythopœic faculty would have it?

A few German writers make some fuss over the epic cycle which they have scented out, but the resemblances are somewhat faint and need not detain any one seriously. There is very little or no confusion between the characters; the heroes and kings have their separate individualities marked out. No golden age is wistfully sighed for, and with no superhuman virtues or perfections are the *dramatis personæ* decked out. The ordinary human passions, love, rage, grief, jealousy, impetuosity, ambition, hatred, and even worse impulses, have full sway, and are depicted in their proper places with varying shades of intensity. Ugly traits and incidents are equally

prominent, and carry forward the action in concert with their opposites. There is no perceptible desire to palliate the sins of heroes or kings, or to pass over national humiliations and blunders. The impiety, arrogance, and bluster of Jamshid, following on a career of unexampled prosperity, are declared to be the causes of his undoing. Iraj, the valiant, generous, and trusting prince, a son of Faridun, is slain by his two brothers, and bitterness and grief cloud the evening of the just Faridun's days. Kai Gushtasp, rather than fulfil his promise to abdicate in favour of his son Isfandyar, who extricated him and his kingdom from many a scrape, consigns the son to destruction by laying an impossible task on his shoulders. He is required to produce Rustom bound in fetters before his father, but is no match for the seasoned warrior. Isfandyar's son, Bahman Darazdast, who is identified with Artaxerxes Longimanus, puts to the sword the semi-independent chieftains of Seistan, whose forefathers had pulled the kingdom through many a crisis. Wickedness, cruelty, and tyranny are centred in Zohâk, who overthrows Jamshid, whilst craft, guile, and enchantment are personified in Afrasiab, Persia's implacable enemy. The Iranians and Turanians are constantly at odds, and there are per-

petual negotiations and outbreaks of hostilities. The national epic is crowded with stirring scenes. War and thrilling adventures, rebellions and intrigues and crimes, gallantry and its escapades, are thickly strewn over the pages of the Namehs. The whole of this terrible drama, in which the horrors, the tragedies, and the fitful course of human destiny are unrolled in a sequence of cause and effect, cannot be the figment of imagination, but must have been imprinted on the memory of generations which witnessed the catastrophes and triumphs of their country. What single genius or combination of geniuses could have created out of nothing this vast gallery of famous characters and concatenation of events, though genius may have embellished or invented individual episodes, or adorned popular idols with graces they did not own ?

Other indications in the same sense are not wanting. The primitive mind of man delights in linking ordinary phenomena with the manifestations of the will of supernatural powers, and accordingly the supernatural agencies of the Namehs are a legacy bequeathed by its operations, thus confirming the ancient origin of the legends. The demons who fight against the armies of Persia are perhaps men of alien creeds, conceived as the instruments of Ahrimân, the Spirit of Evil. Still it is inter-

esting to find Tha'âlibi recording that allegorical interpretations of parts of Persian history were the fashion at all events before the date of his book, and that the subjugation by King Tahmuras of demons, which earned him the sobriquet of Div-bund, veiled the meaning that he had mastered his passions. The versions of some transactions given in the different Namehs are at sixes and sevens, but these variations are characteristic of floating tradition. Even in a book like the Koran, venerated by the Arabs as the word of God, variations crept in within a few years of Mahomed's death. The discrepancies in the Namehs are not therefore to be ascribed merely to the caprices of individual compilers.

The love passages of the Namehs disclose a yawning chasm between pre-Mahomedan and post-Mahomedan Persia. The ancient heroes lavish their attentions on the fair sex, and their hardihood in this respect often embroils Persia in wars with her enemies. In the post-Mahomedan literature of Persia, the Beloved is commonly belauded and apostrophised, but the allusions, sometimes unequivocal, sometimes ambiguous, suggest a sinister significance. Chivalry is not a plant which could have continued to grow in such an uncongenial soil, and disappeared from the new social environment.

Old traditions, if properly examined, open up new vistas in history. It argues a shallow understanding to dismiss them as worthless. Professor Jackson, for instance, has skilfully handled the data supplied by tradition, and reconstructed a biography of Zoroaster, which is intelligible and plausible. Firdausi does not seem to have taken liberties with the records which were accessible to him. His treatment of the Sassanian period tallies substantially with the historical documents left by the Byzantine and other writers; and the other parts of the poem must be placed on a similar historical level — for there is no conceivable reason why he should have been less scrupulous in dealing with remoter periods. The historical imperfections of the epic, such as there are, may be attributed to the drunken frenzy of Alexander the Great, who set fire to the Palace of Persepolis with its treasures of books, and to the bigoted fury of Omar, who, according to Ibn-i-Khaladun, in response to the general's inquiries, directed Sa'ad to throw all Persian books into fire or water.

The burning of Persepolis by Alexander is immortalised in a famous English Ode, and there are good vouchers for the story. Even Alexander's Greek admirers do not withhold it, and possibly lauded it as an act of ven-

geance on the enemies of Greece. The question now agitated is not whether this piece of vandalism was perpetrated, but whether it was a calculated act of policy or a freak of Alexander. Some modern writers would seem to be even pleased with his behaviour! The actual extent of damage which resulted from this infamous folly is not ascertainable. It is, however, easy to comprehend why the history of Alexander himself, and his Seleucidæ successors and the Arsacidæ should occupy a niggardly space in the Eastern chronicles and their prototypes in Pehlavi. In a Pehlavi work still extant, he figures as the accursed Alexander the Roman, who, self-destroyed, fled to hell. The author of Mujmal-ût-tawârikh, Masoudi, and Ardâ Virâf in his Pehlavi work, all unite in certifying that Alexander burnt the Persian books and put to death priests, savants, sages, and nobles. There is nothing in Alexander's barbarian character and mental history to militate against the accuracy of this tradition. Grote, following in the wake of Curtius and Diodorus, asserts that there was a general massacre of the male inhabitants of Persepolis after the conflagration. This undesigned striking corroboration leaves no room for any quibbles on the whole business.

But the Moslem writers have invested

Alexander's career and life with an extraordinary halo of romance. These fables of his exploits have been since definitely affiliated by Darmsteter on the Greek text of the pseudo-Callisthenes. Firdausi, in his history of Iskandar, offers up a *réchauffé* of these fables, and only to that limited extent diverges from the Pehlavi traditions. Through the exertions of budding philologists, Alexander became associated with a being named Dhu'l Quaranayn in the Koran. He was even elevated into an angel by some Moslem writers, and by some others into a prophet, so Tha'âlibi tells us. There is no mistaking, even in Firdausi, the Mahomedan flavour of the romance. Alexander is made by him to visit Ka'aba, the shrine of Mecca, sacred to Islam, and the angel Israfil, whose name pertains to the vocabulary of the Koran, warns him of his approaching end.

Thus the Pehlavi traditions are not responsible for the fabulous Alexander. It is also natural that there should be a blank in these traditions in the times of Alexander and his successors, who were foreigners.

For their national history, the Persians were dependent on the usages of their kings and priesthood, who took a pride in writing up the annals of each successive reign. The mother tongue of Alexander was Greek, and

though he kept a court journal in which each day's events were registered, the Persians could not have been familiar with it. As to the Ashkânians, Firdausi excuses his inability to purvey fuller information on the grounds that no records were available, and that the country was partitioned into petty principalities, which means that there was no central stream of history for the period. The phrase, Mûlûk-ût-tawâif, coined by the Persians and adopted by Firdausi to describe the Parthian monarchs, precisely answers to the state of things sketched by Gibbon. Their empire was a loose agglomeration of vassal states and semi-independent principalities. The principal provinces vested, as hereditary fiefs, in the families of the king's brothers and sons, and the *vitaxæ* or governors assumed regal titles, paying only a nominal obedience to the king. The Seleucidæ and the Arsacidæ did not imitate their forerunners, in the way of committing their deeds to archives. Further, the Persians were, most likely, not conversant with the course of administrative affairs, and they were, in fact, barred from the higher administrative posts under the Macedonians. Their innocence was, in all those circumstances, unavoidable, and not their fault, and it is not necessary to invoke the spectre

of national vanity, in order to understand the barrenness, in details and names, of the Persian annals covering the interval of 550 years of foreign rule. Biruni, whose critical insight and breadth of judgment are remarkable for the age in which he lived, explains the confusion of Persian chronology as due to the conflagration of Persepolis and the disorders following on Alexander's invasion.

Alexander's wanton incendiarism had played havoc with such annals as the Persians possessed before his advent. Omar's edict laying an embargo on Persian books was productive of equally disastrous consequences. Copies of stray royal archives might, at either of these critical junctures, have been in private hands, and these would have been supplemented by private deeds, unofficial histories, and popular ballads. In the absence of printing, copies are not always faithful reproductions of the originals. Again, there was no school of critical historians to tabulate, arrange, and collate these remnants of an earlier mass—the flotsam and jetsam of a huge wreck—and the result was a certain amount of chaos, hiatuses, and inversions of facts. The Moslem copyists were not qualified themselves to educe order out of chaos. Firdausi, as his recital flows, honestly recurs to his

original authorities, by way of preface to a new reign or new era. Among these, he specifically mentions the Nâma-é-Khusravân, Nâma-é-Bâstân, oral traditions of the Dehkans, and records generally. Thus we know, he did not eschew the compositions of his Mahomedan precursors. The original version has passed through several hands, and those, too, not always sympathetic. All these facts, and others made out in Section I., are the true sources of the defects and errors of the Great Epic, as also of the Oriental chronicles. It has to be, moreover, recollected, that even the most scientific historians of modern periods are not all agreed as to their estimates or facts.

The idea, so persistently iterated, that the ancient Persians or the Mahomedan Persians have manipulated authentic documents, is thus absolutely untenable. There is no direct evidence for it, and as an inference, it is shut out by the considerations just urged. If the ancient Persians had a weakness for doctoring and editing documents, the evil deeds and malignant dispositions of some of their kings would not have been heard of, nor the humiliations of their nation.

The main ground for rejecting the existence of the Peshdadyan and early Kayanian kings of Eastern chronology seems to be the

reticence of Greek writers, who ignore all the predecessors of Cyrus the Great.

The Greek historians command the almost implicit confidence of modern historians in Europe, when any part of Asiatic history is a topic of discussion. This confidence is not, however, founded on any logical reasons. The history of a well-known period, like that of Alexander the Great, has been written by Arrian, Curtius, Diodorus, and others, whose versions Grote reviews. These versions do not chime in unison. How are such writers and their countrymen after that to be relied upon, when they profess to write the annals of foreign lands, and of times farther removed than those of Alexander? What deals the death-blow to the credit of Greek history is Professor Bury's demonstration that Darius' conquest of Thrace was a reasonable and successful enterprise, instead of being an insane and disastrous expedition as misrepresented by the Greek writers.

Herodotus is always made much of in recent years, though discredited by his own countrymen almost from the beginning, and though he is under great disadvantages as compared with the later writers. Rawlinson in his preface to the translation dissects the book under the limitations set by contem-

porary researches. Briefly put, the shortcomings of Herodotus are, his theory of the divine nemesis, credulity in respect of marvels in nature and extraordinary customs among tribes of men, a tone of exaggeration and hyperbole, want of political discernment and critical acumen in geography and meteorology, &c., above all, discrepancies and contradictions, and lack of insight into the causes, bearing, and inter-connection of the events he records. His Egyptian and Babylonian histories are found to be brimful of mistakes, and Rawlinson apologises for him. But even his narrative of the reign of Cyrus is not purely historic, though Herodotus was himself born within fifty years of the death of Cyrus. The monumental records of Persia have shaken his veracity on that and other points. All the same, Rawlinson seeks to shift the blame on the Persians themselves, among whom Herodotus searched out his informants. Yet the Greek never set his foot in Persia proper, we are told. So much the worse for him and his information, one may say, and it was no fault of the Persians themselves, if the chronicler did not know how to choose his informants. What still more diminishes the credit of Herodotus is that, in his days at least, copious documents bearing on Persian history were in existence and he made little use of them.

Further, with his infantile intellect and the meagre equipment incidental to the dawning civilisation of Greece, he was not fitted to closely and profitably cross-examine his witnesses, and to elicit complete and satisfactory information on Persian history. On all these grounds, his omission of the pre-Achemenian rulers does not signify.

Professor Sayce, who has kept abreast of the recent advances in Egyptology and Assyriology, &c., draws up a severe indictment against Herodotus and classical writers in general on the subject of Oriental history. "The net result of Oriental research," he says, "in its bearing upon Herodotus is to show that the greater part of what he professes to tell us of Egypt, Babylonia, and Persia, is really a collection of 'märchen,' popular stories, current among the Greek loungers and half-caste dragomans on the skirts of the Persian Empire." The history of Herodotus, he finds, is not only untrustworthy but unveracious, and the writers of Greece and Rome are unsafe guides in Oriental history. The Professor has accordingly rewritten the story of the ancient Empires of the East from the altered point of view.

Among the other Greek writers, Xenophon did not undertake to write a regular Persian

history. Ctesias is decried by some modern writers, but his original work has not come down, and is known only at second-hand. Professor Sayce rightly regards his work as more weighty than that of Herodotus. The writers who followed this trio did not live near enough to the times of the Achemenidæ, and probably borrowed freely from the trio. That they made any special inquiries or dipped into indigenous records, there is no reason to imagine. None of the Greek writers have therefore any special claims to authority, in speaking of the first kings of the Achemenian dynasty, or of the pre-Achemenian dynasties. What is really amazing is the credulity of not a few modern scholars and historians, who believe in the Greek writings as the sole or principal receptacles of truth touching Asiatic affairs.

On the other hand, it is abundantly clear that ancient Persia possessed a rich store of authentic documents, in a variety of forms—sculptured memorials, of which some are still intact, such as public inscriptions on pillars, rocks, tombs, and palaces; medals, cylinders, &c., from which in our days Persian history has been partly reconstructed; also private and public documents written upon skins or parchment, and preserved in the treasuries of the empire at Babylon, Susa, &c. A wise

provision of the Persian kings was the maintenance of royal archives, even before the accession of Darius I., and the organisation of a secretarial department, to keep accounts and register the royal decrees, to draw up catalogues of troops and statements of public revenues. The secretaries also discharged most important functions in the scheme of Darius Hystaspis, enabling the king to keep an eye over the Satraps, by their direct communications with him. On the restoration of the Persian monarchy under Ardeshir, that king, we learn from Firdausi, hastened to reorganise the personnel and the business of the secretariat bureaux. He was very particular about public accounts, and held the secretaries or "Dabeers" (in Firdausi's language) in flattering esteem. The Jewish historians and Scriptures, and Herodotus, confirm the existence of these institutions. Again, we have information to the effect that Alexander, after he ascended the throne of Persia, kept a court journal, the Royal Ephemerides, in which each day's events were entered. He aped the manners and the state of the Great King, and in his intoxication went further and claimed divine honours. It is not a wild supposition, then, that the royal diary of the Persian king of kings was the model to which Alexander's diary conformed.

We thus arrive at the important truth that the credentials of the Persian records are of the best, and that they must receive priority over the Greek writings. The pre-Achemenian dynasties are in this way firmly established as part of Persian history. Rawlinson recommends, in concluding his critique of Herodotus, that the probable should be separated from the improbable in whatever the Greek says, and that whatever is probable and not contradicted by better authority may be accepted as historical. Let the same rules be applied to the chronicles which make use of the ancient Persian records. It is ludicrous to lump the old Persian chronology as mythical and legendary and so on. It is almost a truism to say that a work on history is coloured by the idiosyncrasies of its author, however dispassionate and, however modern he be. The truism, it need not be pressed, is exemplified in the Moslem chronicles of ancient Persia, but for that reason their productions are not to be cavalierly set aside. The rationalism of Herodotus is of a distinctly lower grade than that of the Moslem chroniclers.

Professor Browne is persuaded that the Kayanian dynasty is purely mythical, and Darmsteter, in his translation of the Avesta (Sacred Books of the East Series), broaches the theory that Jamshid and Faridun of the

Epic, who are disguised as Yima and Thretaona in the Avesta, were gods reduced into historical personages. Fortunately, Spencer's studies and speculations, which range over an immense area, have discovered the key to the processes which have hitherto baffled disinterested investigators, like Darmsteter and others. Having accumulated a prodigious amount of anthropological evidence, Spencer infers therefrom that the apotheosis of deceased rulers among the ancient historic races was but the continuation of a primitive practice; and, again, that the divine man, as conceived, had everywhere as antecedent a powerful man as perceived. In the appendix to his book on Sociology, he demolishes, in these words, certain theories which obtained in his day: "The mythological theory tacitly assumes that some clear division can be made between legend and history, instead of recognising the truth that, in the narrative of events, there is a slowly increasing ratio of truth to error. Ignoring the necessary implication that before definite history numerous partially true stories must be current, it recognises no long series of partially distorted traditions of events. It refuses to see, in the fact that the leading so-called myths describe combats, the evidence that they arose out of human

transactions." Spencer's talent for generalisation has solved the enigma, and there is no better solution to be found. His remarks, however, primarily apply to the Vedic and classical myths, but Firdausi's Epic rests on pre-existing data. There is a higher proportion of truth in it than in religious myths. The main outlines of its plot may be taken as correct, though not all the details which have assumed false dimensions in the long perspective. For all his poetic temperament, Firdausi was a conscientious and careful chronicler. A comparison between the Epic and two Pehlavi works, still extant, viz. the "Kârnâmâk-i-Artakhshatra Pâpakân," *i.e.* the gests of Artaxerxes, and "Yâtkâr-i-Zarirân," brings out Firdausi's close fidelity to the originals. As becomes a poet, Professor Nöldeke points out, he adds picturesque touches here and there. Firdausi himself harks back candidly at every convenient halting-place to his original authorities, and never pretends that he is the architect of the gigantic chronological edifice.

After the above dissertations, it was with no less surprise than satisfaction I lighted on Chapter I. Book II. of the *Histoire des Perses*, by Gobineau, entitled "Façon de comprendre l'histoire iranienne et ses sources." He stoutly upholds the authenticity of the Namehs, and considers them superior to histories. "Dans

les namehs la verité entre comme ingrédient necessaire," he says. In the tenth century, interest in Persian antiquities became a passion, and historians, provincial annalists, and poets, amassed and co-ordinated materials which were in the custody of the Dehkans, who were originally an order of grandees ornamenting the Sassanian society. Gobineau continues: "Je suis moins frappé et scandalisé de l'incoherence remarquée par nos cretiques de plusieurs redactions de ces antiques souvenirs que je ne l'admire la quantité qui s'en est conservé et l'aspect vivant et vrai que sur tant de retouches la plupart ont conservé. Il y a des lacunes, il y a des endroits frustes, il y a des transpositions évidentes de dates, tel fait étant donné pour ancien est relativement moderne et au rebours et cependant, un amas immense et imposant d'une realité certaine subsiste." Even the facts of history, he argues, are subjects of endless suspicions, refutations, and discussions. He sees nothing unreasonable or improbable in the Peshdadyan, *i.e.* the primal dynasty, having reigned 2441 years. He identifies Jamshid, who has been allotted a span of 700 years, with the whole line of his successors. A familiar example of this kind of practice is that of the Roman emperors, who were all Cæsars, and thus, by applying the analogy, the Persian chronology, which,

as regards the Peshdadyans, otherwise also includes four reigns of short duration, can be brought within the range of probabilities. De Gobineau puts in practice his own teaching, and has done his best to systematise the history of Persia prior to the accession of Cyrus the Great. His contentions have not been opposed by any subsequent writer, but simply the old fallacies are reverted to quietly by other than French historians, it being so much less troublesome to do so. Seeing that Richardson before him, and Spencer after him in a more comprehensive survey, reach the same goal by different routes, his reasoning is not displaced and his method holds the field.

Richardson enters a strong plea in support of tradition, because, he urges, Persians and Asiatics have been remarkably attentive to the annals of their country. Barbier de Maynard likewise thinks that the "Shahnameh" is a mine of information relative to Persian society and manners and inner political history, and merits careful scrutiny. Traditions disclose the unconscious workings of the mind of the people who cherish them, and in turn become ingrained in their habitual thoughts and sink into their emotions, thereby subtly modifying their character. The true meaning and uses of tradition are on this wise unlocked by

the Evolutionists. The social fabric is partly woven out of ancient tradition, it cannot be gainsaid. Again, "the national type of character is the product of past history, and embodies all the great social forces by which it has slowly shaped itself." The powerful body of Persian traditions, which swell into whole volumes, has not been a little instrumental in moulding the Persian character in ancient times, and a study of the Persian chivalry is all the more helpful on that account. The obliteration of these traditions, except in a remote corner of Persia, by the Arabs, and the boiling in Mahomedan Persia of the racial cauldron which transformed its constituents, will, in company with other causes religious and political, account for the change which came over Persian manners and spirit after the Arab conquest.

V

Persian Chivalry and its Influences

IT is interesting to institute a parallel between the mediæval chivalry of Europe and the manners of the heroic age as reflected in the Persian Epic.

Cornish has written an admirable monograph on chivalry in the Social Science Series, and his propositions may be accepted without demur. He defines chivalry as the moral and social law and custom of the noble and gentle class in Europe during the later middle ages, and the results of that law and custom in action. The principal factors were war, religion, and the love of ladies—the principles of service to God, the feudal suzerain, and lady, underlay everything. The knight was bred up to think much of ceremony, *i.e.* courtesies of daily life and ceremony of consecration to knighthood, and his bearing in battle and tournament. Connected with heraldry and ceremony were the laws and usages of the feudal system, the tenure of land by knight service, and consequent fealty

to the lord. A knight's leisure time was spent in hawking and hunting, or in music and amorous poetry. In the course of the eleventh century the development of feudalism regularised the institution, but it was still in a barbarous and violent stage. The crusades, there is a consensus of opinion, introduced new features. In the earlier crusades Cornish finds one element wanting—the love of ladies. Between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries, the gallantry of Arabs altered all the relations of social life. Chivalry upheld courage and enterprise, and glorified the virtues of liberality, good faith, unselfishness, and courtesy, and above all, courtesy to women. "From the end of the thirteenth century," says St. Palaye, "the chivalrous ideal was modified under the influence of advancing civilisation and the romances of the Round Table." Gallantry and softened and refined manners replace the brutalities of the earlier period, and this change, Cornish insists, is traceable to Moorish influences. Courtesy was never carried so far as in Spain, Cornish tells us.

Almost all the elements just shadowed forth are painted in their concrete forms in vivid colours and in a harmonious setting on the ample canvas of the "Shahnameh." Malcolm makes these pithy comments: "A

spirit of chivalry prevailed throughout the country from the commencement till the end of the Kayanian dynasty. Courage was held higher than generosity and humanity. If we credit Firdausi, most of the laws of honour appear to have been understood and practised. The great respect in which the female sex was held was the principal cause of progress in civilisation. They had an honourable place in society, and we must conclude that an equal rank with the males, secured to them by the ordinances of Zoroaster, belonged to them long before the time of the reformer."

Only a cursory sketch of the tableau unfurled by the Epic in the pre-historic portions can be here drawn. Heroes, princes, and generals march in a stately procession before our eyes, the common *roturiers* being in the background. Narimań, Salm, Zal, and Rustom, who rule as chieftains of Seistan in succession and by hereditary right, and occupy the position of feudal vassals, tower above the rest as champions of Iran, and sustain the throne. They enjoy the tumult of war, and Rustom is often called out from his retreat to defend the country when menaced by external enemies. It was in keeping with the spirit of the fundamental institutions of chivalry, that Zal's valour and capacity were

put to the proof by King Minuchehr, before the latter would consent to his union with the lady of his choice. He was an expert rider, and outstripped every competitor in exercises with the bow, the javelin, and the mace. The tournament was turned into an occasion for a brilliant spectacle, and a distinguished company was called together to gaze on the deeds of arms. Zal was likewise required, before he could win the hand of the beauteous dame, to solve a riddle proposed in poetic language.

Rustom is loyal to the core, and though insulted and ill-treated by the feeble-minded and capricious despot Kaikaus, he does not desert the cause of Iran. In his contests with his juniors, Sohrab, his own son unknown to him, and Isfandyar, he displays much generosity and consideration, and seeks to dissuade them from trying conclusions with him. He and Isfandyar, before they join in mortal combat, make offers of hospitality each to the other. Rustom could not help fighting to keep his honour untarnished, whilst he bewails the cruel necessity which compels him to slay Isfandyar, who would not desist.

For three or four days preparatory to their rush into the fray and din of battle, the heroes generally feast and revel, drinking

copious draughts of wine; not unlike the mediæval knights who carried with them the joy of life, feasts, and amusements, wherever they wandered. A recurring complaint of the Epic is, that magic and enchantment, which are not permissible in a fair game of warfare, are unscrupulously resorted to by the foes of Iran.

Firdausi describes Sohrab's education. At five he was skilled in arms and all the arts of war, and at the age of ten he was irresistible. At twenty, impatient to test his prowess in battlefield, and impelled by the thirst for glory, he leaves his mother's home in Semangan, at the head of a Touranian army, to overawe Persia, join forces with his father, and wrest the crown of Persia for himself and his family. Rustom, who is, heart and soul, devoted to the service of Persia and was living even in ignorance of the birth of his son, the same Sohrab, sallies forth to confront him, and on seeing the havoc caused by him, wishes to prevent it, and challenges him to a single combat, which is to decide the issue of war. The heroes enter into a friendly altercation, and then punctiliously and ceremoniously set about the grim business of warfare. There is no foul play on either side, and for a time they are evenly matched; if anything, Rustom

is handicapped by his age. Rustom's experience, skill, and dexterity ultimately prevail over the youth's herculean might.

Firdausi is enamoured of another great hero, a progeny of heroes, the lion-hearted Bizun, whose love adventure, nothing less than his infatuation for the daughter of Persia's enemy King Afrasiab, is perhaps the most perilous of its kind in the Nameh, and verges on the tragic. The generous prince Siâwûsh was foully and treacherously murdered, and the Touranian noble, Hâmoun, is guilty of complicity in the crime. Bizun is burning with a zeal to avenge the prince's death, and to cross swords with Hâmoun. He obtains the permission of his father to bring the traitor to his heels. He vaults into the saddle, seizes his mace, girds up his loins, and gallops his charger into the lists. The Tarjûman (Dragoman), who acted more or less like a herald, then in a loud voice proclaims Bizun's challenge to Hâmoun. "Come hither, if you wish to fight," he cried out, "Bizun defies you." When Hâmoun appears, Bizun gives him the choice of the arena, hill or valley, or the military camps, offering to close with him in the death struggle anywhere. Next they indulge in a little gasconading on both sides and verbal sparring. Before commencing the fight, each one pro-

mises not to harm the other's dragoman, on his own behalf, on proving victorious. Wearing a glittering helmet, the badge of royalty, which once belonged to Siâwûsh, Bizun charges his antagonist. Either combatant delivers terrific blows with his lance, and the weapons and cuirasses are shivered. They then attack each other with swords, and lastly with their iron maces. They also wrestle with their hands, each striving to unseat the other. Finally they dismount, and Bizun felling his adversary to the ground cuts off his head.

Bizun accomplishes several heroic tasks at the behests of his sovereign lord, ridding the country of enemies and pests, but does not rove about as a knight-errant in quest of fantastic adventures. Persian chivalry did not degenerate to a fantastic pitch.

A singular custom of duelling stands out in the "Shahnameh." The armies of Tourân and Irân are face to face on the battlefield, prepared to give battle. At this moment the leaders of the two armies, after pourparlers, make a pact that either of them should select ten champions on his side, and that the enemy's army should surrender to whichever side wins. The leaders give out that their object is to spare the lives of common soldiers, and avert slaughter on either

side. The custom was certainly very humane, and is an eloquent testimony to the genuine chivalrous instincts of those days. In the sequel, we learn that after the Touranian champions were worsted, two of the surviving chiefs counselled the army to resist, but their advice was not heeded. The laws of warfare of those days did not forbid stratagems against the enemy, and they have not been yet ruled out as unlawful by the modern international code of morals.

During the lifetime of king Kaoos, there arose a question as to who should be the heir-apparent to the throne, some of the nobles befriending the cause of one prince, and some of the other son of Kaoos. The king thereupon decided to settle succession on the son who should capture Bahman's castle, an enemy's stronghold, in Ardabeel. The decision was in accordance with the spirit of the times.

The Persians were well versed in the science of gallantry. The loves of Zal and Rudabeh, Kaikaoos and Sudaveh, Rustom and Tehmina, and Bizun and Menizeh, with others less famous, diversify and enliven the Epic with romantic episodes. The heroes are fond of the chase, and go in quest of exploits which expose them to dangers. Their coat of mail, helmet, and their early training in

the weapons of war, complete their equipment of knightly character.

A rapid glance at the enterprises undertaken by Rustom and Isfandyar will recall many a similar incident of the mediæval romances. Kaikaoos and his army are prisoners in the hands of demons. Rustom engages to deliver them, and proceeds by the Heft-Khan route, which consists of seven stages. (1) His horse, Raksh, tears to pieces a lion; (2) he traverses a burning desert; (3) kills a furious dragon; (4) destroys a sorceress; (5) conquers Aulad, who points out the caves of demons, and finally despatches Arzang, the chief of the demons (or giants). He next assaults Mazandaran and releases Kaikaoos, who has been rendered blind by the art of demons. Lastly, he overthrows and kills the white demon, the blood of whose heart restores the king's sight. The King of Mazandaran is represented as a magician who shares the common fate of Rustom's other enemies. One fine day Rustom, in a sporting spirit, leads forth seven heroes on a hunting expedition with the intention of poaching on the preserves of Afrasiab, Persia's enemy, and safely conducts them back to Persia after routing the latter, who had ventured to attack them. Isfandyar is the redoubtable champion of Zoroastrian-

ism, and rejoices in the appellation Ruintan, *i.e.* with a body of brass or encased in brass. He is invulnerable but for his eyes. In his war against Arjasp, the foe of his religion, he chooses the shortest and most perilous route, the Heft-Khan, in order that he may come to close quarters with him. As he proceeds, he destroys wolves, a lion and lioness, and a dragon eighty yards in length. He next slays an enchantress and destroys a simurgh, *i.e.* a winged monster. He is after that overtaken by a tempest of wind and snow, but is unhurt. The last stage consists of a burning desert. Before he started, his guide strove to divert him from his purpose by impressing upon him that no monarch, even supported by an army, had dared to tread the route, and that anybody making the attempt was foredoomed to annihilation.

Rustom remains the mirror of Persian chivalry. He performs superb feats of valour and outshines others in disinterestedness and piety. He prays before a battle commences, and thanks his Creator on his safe return. He is entrusted with the education of two princes, heirs to the throne, and faithfully executes his trust. He and his comrades-in-arms amuse themselves with hawking and the "yûz" hunt. He can deftly finger the lyre, and in the wilderness sings of

his own exploits and wanderings. He is never vanquished, and dies only a victim of treachery. Even in the agony of death he shoots his traitorous brother with his arrow, and exacts his vengeance.

Thus the affinities between the Persian and European institutions of chivalry are manifold and striking. The point is, that the Persian history and Namehs influenced the Arabs, who in their turn stamped their impress upon European chivalry. Cornish contends that the Arabs contributed the gay science, "gai saber," to the mediæval chivalry. St. Palaye lays down that "la galanterie était comme l'âme de la société." Further, Cornish makes out that the literary art of the Middle Ages was not a little indebted to the East. He says, "The troubadours of Provençe were the founders of European poetry. Their own art of song and verse was derived from the Arabs, to whom it came from Persia. All the artifices of rhyme and rhythm had been exhausted by the Arab poets of Spain, and their methods and subjects were adopted by the Provençals, and in the matter and form there was little to be added." The Muses had made their abode in Moorish Spain, and songs and verses filled the air. The Moorish society, from the highest to the lowest, was one tuneful choir, and from them the Spanish

minstrels and Italian troubadours, as also the Provençals, says another authority, borrowed hints for their ballads and canzonettes.

Dunlop, in his "History of Fiction," discusses four theories touching the supernatural machinery of mediæval romances, and of these three may be put out of court at once. What he calls the Armorican system, is a blunder as noticed by him. A second hypothesis fathers the said machinery on classical authors, who were scarcely known in the Dark Ages. The Scaldic odes are in no better case, there being in them no dragons, giants, magic rings, or enchanted castles. The Asiatic romances and chemical works of Arabians are, on the other hand, full of enchantments, which are a concomitant of chivalry. "In the Eastern 'peris' we may trace the origin of the European fairies, in their qualities, and perhaps in their name. The griffin or hippogriff of Italian writers seems to be the famous simurgh of the Persians." Warton, in his "History of English Poetry," maintains that Europe borrowed the extravagant stories of giants and monsters from the Asiatics. Dunlop makes a shrewd guess, that a great number of the romantic wonders were picked up by that idle and lying horde of pilgrims and palmers who visited the Holy Land. Richardson quotes at some length from a Persian source

the story of Tehmuras, a Peshdadyan king, in fairyland, negotiating an alliance with the fairies and protecting them, and asserts that the warriors who disport themselves in fairyland are all ancient Persian kings and heroes. The fairies flit across Firdausi's pages only in the remote antiquity of the reigns of Kaiomarz and Jamshid. Richardson likewise picks out some coincidences between Persian and European romances. His conclusion is that Persia is the classic ground of fiction, and the centre from which it has spread to every surrounding and distant country.

The next step is to prove, that the Persian literature and influences actually permeated the Arab modes of thought and life, during the periods which heralded the intellectual activity of the Arabs. Towards the eighth century of the Christian era, Persians acquired a controlling voice in the affairs of the Mahomedan Empire which was then uprising. In the first two centuries of the Hijrah, the fiery soldiers of the Koran had carried their banner over all the three continents of the known world. The Persians were at first trodden down by their Arab masters, but their lively intellectual qualities assert themselves in process of time and raise them to a commanding position. A few quotations from eminent Orientalists will let in a flood

of light on the whole situation. Goldziher remarks, that the Arabs during the first two centuries of the Hijrah looked down with sovereign contempt on the studies so zealously prosecuted by non-Arabs, which vastly benefited grammar and lexicology. Muir thus announces the Abbasid Dynasty: "With the rise of Persian influence, the roughness of Arab life was softened, and there opened an era of culture, toleration, and scientific research." Dozy speaks in the same strain: "The ascendency of Persians over the Arabs had already been a long time in course of preparation; it became complete when the Abbasides mounted the throne." The Abbasides filled the throne from A.D. 750 to 1258. In the tenth century, with Khalif Hakem II. of Spain, Rénan writes in his *Averroès et L'Averroïsme*, commenced in Europe the brilliant series of Mahomedan studies which endured for two centuries. Books produced in Persia and Syria were known in Spain before they were heard of in the East. Hakem remitted 1000 gold dinars to Abualfaraj Ispahani, an Arab littérateur residing in Irak, in order to secure the first copy of his celebrated Anthology. Professor Browne clinches the matter thus: "In the intellectual domain the Persians were supreme in the great Mahomedan Empire which extended from

Gibraltar to the Jexartes, and were the principal contributors to Arab science, philosophy, history, &c."

Huart, in his *Littérature Arabe*, puts the point more effectively and tersely still: "Au viii^e^ siècle, dans la littérature (arabe) l'influence persane est immense; elle pénétre tout; la poésie, la théologie, le droit; c'est que les Arabes n'écrivent plus, et que tout, l'administration, les charges de cour, la justice, appartiennent à des non-Arabes, et que la littérature est écrite par des non-Arabes."

It is no longer necessary here, after the studies of the last section, to enlarge on the truth that Firdausi has reproduced the lineaments of the ancient Persian society, and owes nothing to his surroundings except a few errors. His patron, Mahomed of Ghazni, to go no further, was fired by an iconoclastic zeal, and sated his bloodthirsty appetite by wholesale butcheries in India. In fine, the atmosphere Firdausi breathed was incompatible with chivalry. What leaves no room for doubt that Firdausi gives a transcript and no fancy picture of his own, is, that the first two dynasties of Firdausi's Epic are incorporated in the Yashts of the Avesta. The Avesta was, in its original form, an encyclopædia of ancient learning, purporting to emanate from Zoroaster, and, at least judging

from the internal evidence of language, reaches back to a hoary antiquity.

Firdausi flourished between A.D. 935 and 1025. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* puts down 1150 as the date of the earliest notice of the *Chansons de geste*, and assigns to the second half of the thirteenth century *Morte d'Arthur*, which belongs to the oldest cycle of the mediæval romances.

The later French writers group mediæval romances under three cycles, and Paul Lacroix sees in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the flourishing period of the Romance Literature. These romances were for the most part narratives of wonderful and warlike adventures. The *Chansons de geste* fall under the first cycle, and are divisible into two sections, the royal epic and the feudal epic. In the Breton or Arthurian cycle, the brutal manners of the *Chansons de geste*, Réné Doumic writes, give place to a delicate refinement and politeness. In this second cycle, the marvellous leaps to an important position, and the sentiment of love predominates. Arthur figures as the founder of chivalry, presiding over his supreme court of chivalry, and as the creator of tournaments. The Arthurian legends are not of an earlier date than the thirteenth century, and it is these legends which have a romantic

colouring. The latest cycle, the cycle of antiquity, is a tame and didactic affair, and is not relevant to our purposes. Thus there was a sufficiently long interval between the "Shahnameh" and the appearance of the mediæval romances.

Leaving aside the "Shahnameh," the Arabs were familiar with the legendary history of Persia, from the sixth and seventh century onwards. The Koran itself, which was issued piecemeal in the seventh century, to suit the author's practical exigencies, furnishes irrefragable proof in its twenty-first chapter. Nathr-ibn-al-Hareth, an Arab merchant, had purchased in Persia the legends of Rustom and Isfandyar, and was confounding Mahomed by reading them to the tribe of Qurais, whose conversion it was Mahomed's policy to effect, and holding them up as more wonderful than the Koran. In return for his discomfiture, Mahomed in the above chapter concocted the special revelation proscribing them. Saad-ibn-i-Wakas was evidently fascinated, or else he would not have appealed, when he had overrun Persia in the middle of the seventh century, to the Caliph for permission to transfuse the history into Arabic. Of recent years the origins of the "Shahnameh" have been assiduously investigated, and Rosen is the latest authority on the subject. It has been

ascertained that the first Arabic version published was that of Ibn-al-Mukaffa, an apostate from the ancient faith, who translated the Pehlavi work "Khodai-Namak" in the middle of the eighth century A.D. Such was its vogue and popularity, that a whole batch of Arabic books entitled Siyar-ûl-mûlûk, all histories of Persia, were put on the literary market, as also a number of Shah Namehs, which were eclipsed and superseded by Firdausi's *chef-d'œuvre.*

A Moslem writer, with characteristic sciolism, claims Arabia as the cradle of European chivalry, and flouts its Teutonic origins. So far as anything can be gathered, he rests his case on two facts, viz., (1) that to avenge an insult offered to a girl a certain Arab tribe carried on the customary vendetta, and (2) that Antar was a kind of knight-errant. As to (1), it was merely a part of the tribal code, and no sentiment of deference to women which kindled the strife. Antar, again, was of negro extraction, black and despised, not a typical Arab, but an abnormal specimen. He was a poet and swashbuckler, the product of a savage society. The romance of his adventures portrays the manners of the primitive Arabs, their hospitality, their vindictive nature, liberality, their amours, love of plunder, and natural

taste for poetry. Rude ages are prolific in these traits, and even the Homeric heroes are not devoid of a certain barbarous chivalry. Dr. Goldziher, in his *Mahomedanische Studien*, counts among the cardinal virtues of pagan Arabs, personal courage, unstinted generosity, lavish hospitality, unswerving loyalty to kinsmen, ruthlessness in avenging wrong offered to oneself or one's relations. Here is no germ of chivalry, or of the arts of gallantry, and, what is more, the spirit of Islam is inimical, nay, fatal to the development of reverence for the fair sex. Chapter iv. of the Koran in explicit terms affirms the inferiority of women to men, and enjoins the castigation of perverse wives. Chapter xxiii. peremptorily decrees that women shall be screened under a veil, and has in practice ended in their imprisonment in the fetid atmosphere of the zenana.

On hearing that Pourândûkht, the beautiful daughter of Perwiz, was seated on the throne of Persia, Mahomed cried out, "the affairs of a nation which leans on a woman cannot prosper." In his simplicity of mind Tha'âlibi acclaims this as the outpouring of the prophetic soul; but the fact is, the benign, wise, and just rule of this princess cast a transient gleam of radiance through the dark clouds of anarchy fast gathering over the

unhappy land. The unsophisticated Moslem to this day characterises womenfolk as nâkés-ûl-akl, *i.e.* deficient in wits, and that is the authoritative estimate of the other sex, on which the Prophet has set his seal of approval.

The manners of the heroic age of Persia persisted in historical epochs. The national character has been already limned in Section III. Herodotus testifies that the Persian youth were strenuously drilled in three great accomplishments—to ride a horse, to draw the bow, and speak the truth. The education of boys, which was carefully attended to, was not considered perfect without a course of athletic exercises, as running, slinging stones, shooting with the bow, and throwing the javelin.

VI

Naushirwan the Just

GIBBON seems to have led the way, and, since then, the common practice amongst the Orientalists of Europe has been to paint in black colours all Persian kings. They fashion with their own hands the simulacrum of an Oriental despot, and then invest it with some imaginary attributes. These are next taken for granted with a show of logic as true of the whole genus, though the Oriental humanity comprises a varied assortment of types,—infinitely more varied than the Western. It may be at once asserted that the average Oriental despot is no better, no worse, than his congeners of the West.

It is not very clear whether the Orientalists and others who single out the Oriental despot to gibbet him, have been at pains to study Western despotism, or shut their eyes to it so that they may heap all the odium and venom on only one section of humanity. Has the history of civilised mankind any-

thing more abhorrent to offer than the enormities committed by the Roman and Byzantine emperors? The Byzantine emperors have been sufficiently denounced by the writers already quoted. To turn to Roman history, Nero (A.D. 58–68) is an unapproachable type of inhuman monster, and he was only a shade worse than several men who assumed the purple before and after him. In his history of Rome, Merivale, writing of Nero, says: "The tyranny of Rome, and with it of Roman emperors, has now reached its climax. Such atrocities as those recorded in our later chapters border on the incredible. It is not so much the barbarity of the despots as the patience of the subjects which moves our wonder," &c. For cruelty and debauchery, no man attained such notoriety as Tiberius (A.D. 20–37). He destroyed all who stood in his way, and did away with his relatives. Caligula (A.D. 37–41) gave way to unbridled license and cruelty. He executed people without any accusation or process of any kind, and wantonly killed soldiers by whole companies. Domitian (A.D. 81–96) was charged with atrocious murders and barbarous cruelties. Those who came in contact with Commodus (A.D. 180–192) were never safe from his capricious cruelty. The Christian hero Constantine, styled by a

cruel irony the Great, was guilty of revolting crimes. His wife, son, nephew, his benefactor the Emperor Maximian, and his personal friends, fell victims to his ferocity. Why lengthen out the list and recount the infamies of Caracalla, Elagabalus, Maximin, Philip, and Gallienus? Let not the Western peoples fling stones from glass-houses.

To descend to modern history: there was, to select some instances at random, an English king who murdered his nephews, another who put out the eyes of a cousin, a third who beheaded his innocent wives under various pretexts. Peter the Great killed his son, and Catherine murdered her husband.

Rajput and Hindu princes of India have not stained the annals of their reigns with any very sanguinary deeds. The peculiar law of succession imposed by the Koran on all believers has prompted the wholesale slaughter of kinsmen who stand in the position of rivals to the throne, and its mandates, urging that infidels shall not be spared, have choked different parts of the world with carnage. The warlike Prophet, in the exercise of his sacred office, once gloated over the massacre of a whole tribe, and his example and precept are binding on his followers for all time. The invading hordes

of Tartars and Afghans under men like Mahomed of Ghazni, Tamerlane, Nadir Shah, and Abdali revelled in bloodshed, and enacted sickening scenes of horror. Some of the Mahomedan dynasties of India were guilty of similar atrocities, though not on the same scale.

The Pandits of the West have, without much discrimination or discernment, fastened upon the effects of one particular system as a universal manifestation of the Eastern character, so that they may be able to wield the brush vigorously and pronounce decisions with fluency and without effort. Rawlinson has reached the *ne plus ultra* of absurdity in this direction. "Oriental commander," "Oriental insolence," "Oriental prince," "Asiatic character," "Oriental mind," are some of the depreciatory phrases which may be culled anywhere from his pages. They are inanities with no definite connotation of qualities, conjured up on every convenient occasion to hide erroneous deductions or poverty of conception. Nöldeke confuses the modern Persians with the ancients, as if there were not a great gulf fixed between the two races, as the result of historical antecedents and social and religious conditions.

An analysis of the character and genius

of Naushirwan the Just will serve several purposes. It will illustrate the methods of certain writers in misreading or misconstruing Persian history, and also throw into relief the real greatness of that king.

Naushirwan, who is styled Chosroës I. by the Greeks, and Kasrâ by the Arabs, reigned from A.D. 531 to 579. He was the most remarkable personality of his time. He is perhaps the greatest of Asiatic monarchs, with the inevitable exception of Darius I., who endowed Persia with a civil constitution and a military organisation, and created its financial system. His consummate military abilities are acknowledged with one accord. For nearly the whole period of his rule he was plunged in incessant warfare, and was uniformly victorious, over the Romans, with the exception of a slight reverse. He similarly triumphed over the Abyssinians, Epthalites, and Turks, and his sway was owned by dozens of nations. At the age of eighty, he beat back the Roman legions; he also captured the fortress of Dara and plundered Syria. In a score of fights, which he conducted in person, he was defeated but once, and then, too, in a minor engagement. The Persian Empire attained the zenith of its glory and power under him. It extended from the shores of the Mediterranean to the

banks of the Indus, from the Red Sea to the Caspian, and from the Euxine to the Jexartes.

Naushirwan's fame as the living embodiment of justice resounded through the East during his lifetime, and its echoes reverberate across centuries in tales and romances. However, the evidence of his contemporaries is rated very low by the modern judges of the West, and efforts have been made to belittle him. His enlightened and liberal-minded statesmanship and his modern methods of administration are attested by his internal arrangements, the details of which can be gleaned even from the books in European languages. The spirit of his rule is announced in his very first speech addressed to the nobles, which is reported in almost all Moslem histories. When they proffered him the diadem he refused it at first, protesting that he would be unable to reform abuses. He lamented that the offices were filled by worthless and despicable men, and inquired who in such days would make a vain attempt to govern according to the principles of wisdom and justice. "If I do my duty," he continued, "I must make great changes; the result of these may be bloodshed; my sentiments towards many of you would perhaps alter, and families for whom I have now a regard may be ruined. I have

no desire to enter into such scenes; they are neither suited to my inclination nor my character, and I must avoid them." He accordingly disclaimed any intention of undertaking the task, whereupon the nobles took an oath to support him in all his measures. Here he sounded the keynote of his future policy, and his reign is one long fulfilment of the promises. On a later occasion, he also proclaimed to the assembled courtiers the following sound principles:—

"The authority which I derive from my office is established over your persons, not over your hearts. God alone can penetrate into the secret thoughts of men. I desire that you should understand from this that my vigilance and control shall extend only over your actions, not over your consciences; my judgments shall always be founded on the principles of immutable justice, not on the dictates of my individual will or caprice; and when by such a proceeding I shall have remedied the evils which have crept into the administration of the state, the empire will be powerful and I shall merit the applause of posterity."

Naushirwan in this way enunciated an excellent maxim of juridical import, making a near approach to a doctrine which has crystallised in recent years. Law is con-

cerned only with the externals, or overt acts, it is beginning to be felt, and should abandon all attempt to fathom the inward mental state. The full significance of this far-reaching innovation of Naushirwan is lost on the historians; it is taken to breathe a spirit of toleration, which it also does in a narrower sense. The doctrine really goes further and brushes aside metaphysical cobwebs, setting up an external standard of conduct to which all should conform.

Naushirwan's beneficent activity was pushed in every direction, and public service and justice were gainers by it. He did his utmost to eradicate corruption from the courts of justice, and in the choice of judges, prefects, and counsellors, he strove to seek out natural talents, disregarding distinctions of rank and fortune. He preferred the men who "carried the poor in their bosoms," and though Gibbon sneers at this profession of his, it was perfectly sincere, and of a piece with his upright and noble candour. He appointed four viziers to exercise superintendence over the multitude of Satraps who ruled the provinces. He employed a staff of inspectors, whose duty it was to bring to the royal notice the sufferings of the oppressed and the misdeeds of public officials.

On the occurrence of suspicious circumstances, he appointed commissions of inquiry to collect evidence, and to make careful reports of the defaults and malpractices of those in authority. Wrongdoers were visited with swift and signal retribution. He himself journeyed from one end of the empire to another, at short intervals, inquiring into the condition of his subjects. What is still more startling in its modernity is, that education and agriculture were sedulously fostered by him, or, as we should now say, he created the departments of Public Education and Agriculture. In every city of Persia, orphans and the children of the poor were maintained and instructed at the public expense. The girls among these were married to the richest citizens in their own station of life, and the boys were provided for as mechanics or with more respectable berths. Of course, in those days the Persian monarchy was a paternal government.

To the destitute farmers he distributed cattle, seeds, and implements of husbandry. The irrigation canals were improved, and storage reservoirs constructed. The water supply was economically regulated and controlled. In fact, these are some of the functions to which the Indian Government of the twentieth century is devoting its

serious attention. Naushirwan restored depopulated villages, built and repaired caravanserais, schools, and colleges, and laid out bazaars, bridges, and other public edifices. Roads and communications were kept in perfect order, and on the main routes guard-houses were established and garrisons posted to watch the safety of travellers.

Naushirwan's humanity and benevolence are manifest at every turn. The poor, especially those infirm and disabled, were relieved from his privy purse. Mendicancy was forbidden, and idleness made an offence. The priests were charged with the supervision of receivers of taxes and the preventing of undue exactions. Liberal exemptions were granted from the public burdens on the score of age and sex. No females were liable, whilst males above fifty years of age, and those under twenty, were likewise let off scot-free.

Naushirwan's revision of the land-tax, and his re-adjustment of the general taxation, mark a triumph of generous and large-minded administrative skill. The annals of Tabari (A.D. 838–923), a great authority, contain an interesting history of the land-tax, and of the incidents preluding the inauguration of Naushirwan's scheme. Naushirwan made a signal departure from the ordinary methods

of absolutism, when introducing his system of taxation. He summoned a representative assembly of the leaders of different classes, principal landed proprietors, generals, warriors, and secretaries. He laid his proposals before them in a remarkable discourse, expounding his motives and policy, and demanded their consent. On this, the land-tax was named "hamdâstân," *i.e.* one to which the popular consent had been obtained. His scheme permanently lightened the burdens of the peasantry, and Khalif Omar dared not upset it, saying that no institution was juster than the incidence of this land tax. At the date of Tabari's book, no changes had been made in it. The revenue derived from land is the sheet-anchor of the Indian budget, even under latter-day conditions. Ancient Persia, like India, was an agricultural country, and machinery, which can turn out manufactures on a large scale, it goes without saying, was non-existent. The prosperity of Persia depended on a wise distribution of the fiscal dues, and to have placed the financial system on a sound and equitable footing was no contemptible feat.

The crown share of the produce was, in olden times, a fluctuating item, varying between a fourth and a twentieth, and depending on the productiveness of the soil,

the distance from the water supply, and the abundance or scarcity of water, and, further, subject to the condition that the division of harvest was to be effected on the land. For these clumsy arrangements, Naushirwan substituted a tax moderate in amount, payable partly in money, and partly in kind. The quantity of land, which could be tilled with one plough-team, was rated at one dirhem and one measure of produce. The demand of the state was also fixed in perpetuity at a uniform rate on all lands. Uncultivated land, and land lying fallow, paid no tax, and a recurring annual survey with the annual registration of cultivators and their holdings was set on foot. The intelligibility and simplicity of the system, which is really free from the complications imagined by Rawlinson, and which is partially enforced in some provinces of India, must have been a great boon to the cultivator; and it speaks volumes for Naushirwan's sagacity that the principle of levying a prescribed rate on each holding was only adopted by the Indian Government after long and anxious debates and several tentative experiments. An invariable assessment is still an unattained ideal in India. Turgot, one of the greatest administrators Europe has produced, was in favour of the land-tax being a fixed charge,

and, with all the scientific resources of the eighteenth century at his disposal, at last recoiled from the task of determining the assets of each estate whereon to base a graded tax. The Indian Government classifies the soils, with reference to the inherent fertility, &c., but there are rival schemes, and the advocates of one scoff at the other. Naushirwan's plan was therefore on the whole an equitable one. Inferior soils, on which it would have pressed hardly, might not have been brought under the plough, and that was not an unmixed evil. Payments were to be made in quarterly instalments, and notices were published in each province, town, and village, specifying each individual's liabilities in respect of all the imposts. There was also a small tax on each fruit tree, which is not yet abolished everywhere in India. A graduated property-tax on the personalty of each citizen, ranging from six dirhems up to a maximum of forty-eight dirhems, or twenty-seven shillings, and a capitation or poll-tax on Jews and Christians, round off the whole category of taxes.

Thus the taxation in the empire was not oppressive, and can challenge favourable comparison with the modern complicated systems of rates and taxes. It had no

tendency to hamper or strangle industries or trade,—a vice so common in past history to financial systems. Multiplicity of taxes has no charms for some modern economists, and has frequently been the refuge of bad governments. Backward countries, it is worthy of remark, draw up, in their greed for revenue, long schedules of dutiable articles.

The administration of the army was thoroughly overhauled by Naushirwan. Paper armies were not unknown even in those days, and there were soldiers without accoutrements or the full complement of arms. Frauds and make-believe had crept in. The Augean stables were cleansed, and discipline was rigorously enforced. Naushirwan's reforms were best tested in the battlefield, where his army reaped the glory of an unbroken series of victories.

Naushirwan was a patron of science and learning, and, to his lasting honour, afforded a hospitable asylum to a party of seven Greek sages, who were persecuted by Justinian, and had fled from their own country. His most notable achievement in this line was the establishment at Jund-i-Shahpoor of a medical school, which insensibly expanded into and acquired the status of a university, where philosophy, rhetoric, and poetry were taught. This had momentous consequences;

it initiated the movement which culminated in the rise of the so-called Arab philosophy, and kept the torch of learning aglow in the Dark Ages of Europe. As Huart says, this Academy disseminated in the East a knowledge of Greek science and the taste for philosophic and medical studies. Rénan finds that the Aristotelian studies pursued in that Academy brought forth the Arab lexicology. By Naushirwan's order, the most celebrated writers in Greek and Sanscrit were translated into Pehlavi, and a history of the Persian kings was also compiled.

The Sassanian History gave a direct impetus to the historical studies of the Arabs; the translations of that history into Arabic were their first exercises in the art of history-writing, and at the same time evoked a spirit of emulation. The Pehlavi translations from Greek and Sanscrit brought the Persian and Arab minds into contact with new modes of thought, and the glimpse of new intellectual regions obtained through their medium could not fail to fill the mind with zest and curiosity, and urge it on in fresh paths of search and discovery. That the Pehlavi books existed in an Arabic dress is not to be questioned; a catalogue of these Arabic renderings has been rescued from oblivion by the Fihrist, an Arabic treatise

on bibliography, published in A.D. 988, or so. Spain was only one centre in the Saracenic world of the Middle Ages, and its activity was simply part of the general awakening.

Naushirwan ranks high as a legislator, among his other capacities. He revived, according to Tabari and other Moslem writers, the laws of Artaxerxes, the founder of the House of Sassan, and probably revised them and brought them up to date. He consolidated them, and consolidation is, after all, the principal recommendation of the famous code Napoleon, a service not to be despised.

Again, instead of reducing to slavery prisoners of war, as was the practice in those days among other nations, he transferred them to his own territories, and planted, in pursuance of this policy, a Greek colony known in Persian as Rumia, in A.D. 540, in the vicinity of Ctesiphon. The Greek slaves who took shelter in the city were at once liberated. Naushirwan's philanthropy and open-mindedness in admitting alien modes of civilisation within the kingdom took those practical shapes, but the experiment from a political point of view must have conduced to weakness, seeing that there was already too great a diversity of races.

Naushirwan's generosity is one of his many pleasing traits. For a year, after the truce of A.D. 545, Tribunus, a Greek physician, he retained as his medical attendant. On his departure, Naushirwan, to express his gratitude, permitted him to ask any boon he liked. The physician requested the release of some Roman prisoners, but Naushirwan liberated 3000 others with them—a magnanimity the like of which is not recorded of any Western despot. If Tribunus covered himself with glory, because he did not crave a pecuniary reward, as Bury argues, Naushirwan covered himself with greater glory still.

In Rawlinson's words, Naushirwan was brave, hardy, temperate, and liberal. He watched with unceasing care the interests of the poor, and strained every nerve to check or prevent oppression. Gibbon's dictum in one place is, that his government was firm, vigorous, and impartial. In the face of these admissions, the adverse criticisms of this monarch are not easy to understand, except on the hypothesis that the character of a Persian king is a *chose jugée*, and can never be meritorious.

Gibbon declares in an off-hand way that Naushirwan was a tyrant in domestic administration, and actuated by ambition in external affairs. As to his tyranny, his de-

gradation of Mebodes, who is alleged to have backed up Naushirwan's pretensions to the throne, constitutes one count, but Gibbon's authority is Procopius. The Moslem chroniclers have given a different version of the train of events which issued in Naushirwan's succession, demonstrating his unwillingness to assume the reins of government, without a loyal support from the nobles.

Procopius, who was present in many a battle with the Persian army, was too eager to besmirch Naushirwan's name, and must have perverted the facts. Procopius was the secretary and constant companion of Belisarius, who served Justinian so well, and Professor Bury allows that Procopius was not a little preoccupied with "booming" his hero, and trumpeting his virtues. In A.D. 542, Naushirwan, who, having invaded Commogene, was engaged in besieging Sergiopolis, was confronted by Belisarius, and happened to retire hastily from the country. Procopius treats us to a long rigmarole on this event, and insinuates that Naushirwan, who had been inquiring after Belisarius's exploits, went in fear of the latter, and patched up a convention with him. Naushirwan, marching through the Roman Mesopotamia, captured Callinicus, though he had pledged himself,

according to Procopius, not to commit any hostile act on his line of retreat. Secondly, Belisarius had delivered a hostage to Naushirwan, Procopius himself affirms.

With these two facts staring in the face, both Bury and Rawlinson throw over Procopius and justly divine that Naushirwan had to fall back before an invisible foe, the plague, which broke out in Pelusium in the same year. In one place, in his "Seventh Monarchy," Rawlinson complains of the improbabilities to be frequently met with in the Byzantine histories, and has occasion to point out, as he goes along, not a few.

Gibbon's appreciation of Procopius, that "he was excited by the generous ambition of pleasing and instructing posterity," exposes his narrative to grave suspicions, and the man's base inconsistency and character, which Gibbon stigmatises, are no guarantee of his good faith. Procopius, at least, in one of his books spontaneously confesses his dishonesty and falsehood. Professor Bury's excellent account of Procopius may or may not exonerate him from the charge of inconsistency, but no way improves his credit. He was a servile imitator of Herodotus and grossly superstitious. Bury at least concedes that in the history of events prior to his own time Procopius is untrustworthy

and convicted of numerous errors. Hence the statements of Procopius in the history of his own times are outweighed, whenever they conflict with the statements of Moslem writers, who had no ends to serve in their history of ancient Persia.

The second charge levelled against Naushirwan is, that he commanded the execution of his brothers. This is repelled by some acute remarks of Malcolm: "We should," he says, "reflect seriously upon their situation and duties before we execrate the memory of the absolute monarchs of Asia for such acts. We must consider the will of absolute monarchs is to the nation they rule as the law to better ordered states, and that in many cases the indulgence of natural feelings and clemency would be the extreme of partiality, weakness, and injustice." There is a better defence still. The laws of Persia, like those of twentieth-century England, reserved the extreme penalty of death for high treason, and the brothers were implicated in a treasonable conspiracy. The fact that Naushirwan stifled his natural affections for his half-brothers is a tribute to his overmastering passion, love of justice. At any rate, the entire story of a plot hatched by Naushirwan's brothers turns out to be an invention of Procopius. The Moslem writers

narrate, that Kobad designated as his successor Naushirwan, and that the latter's great abilities, conspicuous from an early age, disarmed all opposition and criticism.

As to Naushirwan's ambitions, of which Gibbon discourses, Rawlinson supplies a crushing rejoinder in his narrative of the year A.D. 562. "Success appears to have crowned Naushirwan's arms wherever he directed them, but he remained undazzled by his victories and still retained, at the above date, the spirit of moderation which had led him in A.D. 557 to conclude the general truce. He was even prepared after five years of consideration, to go further on the line of pacific policy on which he had then entered, and in order to secure the continuance of good relations with Rome was willing to relinquish all claims to the sovereignty of Lazica." Naushirwan's dominions were surrounded by the treacherous Byzantine Empire and barbarous tribes like the Arabs and Turks. His military expeditions were more in the nature of defensive operations than otherwise.

Nöldeke in his work on the Sassanian period damns Naushirwan with faint praise, and accuses him of reckless cruelty. He also calls the latter a liar, in the cryptic remark that Naushirwan had little more

regard for the truth than Persians are wont to have. Perhaps the talk of reckless cruelty has about as much basis as Gibbon's sonorous periods about Naushirwan's other deficiencies. Procopius, from whom Nöldeke has perhaps borrowed his ideas on this head, does descant on the severities of Naushirwan towards Mebodes and Chanaranges, but the eloquent silence of the Eastern chronicles turns away the poisoned shafts of the detractor. In fact, Naushirwan's humanity is abundantly proved in the sketch traced above, and is a sufficient answer. Nöldeke's further indictment revolves on a double fallacy. He grafts the habits of the later Mahomedan Persians on the ancient stock, which was ethnically free from the admixture affecting the younger breed. An invulnerable point of the Imperial race of Persia was its rigid observance of truth, and there is not a scintilla of evidence for a decline of that virtue in the Sassanian Persians, remembering that it remained a sacred obligation as before.

If Nöldeke bases his impeachment on the negotiations between the two empires, which were prolonged for many years during the progress of three wars, then we should require to examine the precise wording of the diplomatic correspondence, which, however,

is not forthcoming, before convicting Naushirwan of duplicity. Procopius and Agathias are probably his authorities, but the testimony of both is tainted by personal animosity. Besides, Procopius is unreliable, and Agathias (who takes up the story where Procopius leaves off), it is the general verdict accepted also by Professor Bury, was ignorant and presumptuous. In an epistle addressed to Belisarius, the Persian general Perozes complains that the Romans were always ready to promise, but little inclined to perform their promises even when they had sworn to them, and that they had practised deceit upon the Persians. All this is in perfect harmony with the proverbial inborn truthfulness of the Persians, and the baseness and perfidy which the reprobation of historians and statesmen has fixed on the Byzantine princes and Byzantine civilisation.

Gibbon has hinted at Naushirwan's dissimulation, but the detailed recital of the three Roman wars of Chosroës, set forth by Rawlinson, lends no support to the charge. The charge is not also pressed by Rawlinson (though the latter, as befits an ecclesiastic, sympathises with the Christians, and interprets a harmless joke of Perozes in his letter to Belisarius as a specimen of Oriental insolence). Rawlinson, it may be mentioned

by the way, indirectly taxes Procopius with weaving falsehoods in his narratives of the war of A.D. 540, and the third campaign of Chosroës against the Romans.

The following is a brief *résumé* of what really happened, of the tangled incidents which severally preceded the three wars. In 540 there was a rupture of the treaty between Persia and new Rome, but though it was in appearance an aggressive war, in reality it was a blow struck in self-defence. Embassies were sent to Naushirwan's court by various nations, among them by a king of Italy and an Armenian chief, bearing a long list of grievances, and conveying expressions of alarm that Justinian's schemes of aggrandisement were a menace to the peace of Asia and Europe. The ambassadors recited a series of outrages committed by Justinian, and sought to convince the Persian court, that the treaty obligations had been violated. In A.D. 541, the Lazi, who were Christians groaning under Roman oppression, implored Naushirwan's intervention on their behalf, and he delivered them from the galling yoke—a distinctly benevolent act on Naushirwan's part. In A.D. 549, the Romans, without any pretence, broke the provisions of the truce concluded four years previously, and Rawlinson has no extenuating circumstances to urge. In

A.D. 552, Naushirwan, on the application of a dispossessed descendant of old Homerite kings, interfered in the affairs of Arabia, and reinstated him after driving away the Abyssinian usurpers. In 572, Justin, Justinian's nephew, allied himself with the Turks, and, taking advantage of Naushirwan's advanced age, denounced the treaty made ten years earlier, which had stipulated for a peace of fifty years' duration. It is true that in 540 Naushirwan punished Antioch severely for its resistance, and crushed the revolt of Armenia in A.D. 576. But these measures demonstrate his vigour and resolve to repress all disorder with an iron hand within his territories. He plundered the churches in Antioch, and that act is imputed to Naushirwan's avarice. Plunder has been an ordinary incident of the wars even in the last and current centuries, and the morality of the times has not condemned it as a special fall from grace. Besides, the device of a war indemnity had not been hit upon till very recent times, and it was a more sensible and less harsh proceeding to seize the misapplied communal property of churches and temples than looting private property. Confiscation of properties belonging to churches was not a rare event, even in the last two centuries, of Europe. Thus, on an

impartial survey of the circumstances, little or no blame can be attached to Naushirwan for the wars which were all more or less forced upon him.

In his oracular vein Gibbon asserts, that Naushirwan is not entitled to the appellation "just." Rawlinson repeats the crudity, but vouchsafes some reasons. The punishments which Naushirwan inflicted were severe for the most part, but not capricious, Rawlinson admits. No scientific tariff of penalties can be laid down to fit each crime; time, place, and circumstances, which are constantly shifting, must regulate the quantum in each case. Rawlinson's objection is not so formidable as it looks. Instances of Naushirwan's clemency to offenders are, however, on record. Plotting against the crown or king's person, when the conspirators were of full age; treasonable correspondence with the enemy; invasion of the sanctity of the harem; and proselytism, which was strictly forbidden by the laws, called down capital sentence on the offenders.

The capital sentence would seem to be strangely misplaced in respect of the last two classes of crimes. However, it should be borne in mind that religious propagandism must have been fruitful of evils in the ancient societies in which knowledge

was not diffused, and led to bloodshed, which it was wise to avert by even extreme measures. As regards intrusion into the private apartments of the king, it should not be forgotten that the English laws still in force make it a high treason to corrupt certain ladies of the royal family, and the community is not squeamish about it. The royal family was the pivot of the state in ancient Persia, and the passionate adherence of the Persians to the legitimist doctrine demanded stringent precautions to preserve the purity of the royal strain.

Again, in the eighteenth-century England, which was illuminated by the glitter of Gibbon's style and the sparkle of his sarcasms, the statutes adjudged the death penalty in the case of all felonies, *i.e.* two hundred or so, which included stealing above the value of a shilling, except petty larceny and mayhem. The punishment of treason in England, till some few years back, consisted in quartering and disembowelling the offender, if male, and the burning of women. Hanging was said to be an everyday occurence in the eighteenth century and in the beginning of the nineteenth, being awarded for trivial offences. Those laws were gradually repealed as barbarous after 1820, but what little we know of Naushirwan's laws, directly

or mediately, shows them to have been humane and enlightened.

I am not posted up in the laws of other European countries in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but perhaps these were not ahead of England. Rawlinson records, that the Sassanians practised none of the barbarities which were imputed to the Achemenidæ by the Greek writers in their modes of punishment. The absence of actual barbarities in the Sassanian laws is certain, but whether the Achemenidæ practised them is not so certain.

Thus Naushirwan passes unscathed through the ordeal of such comparisons. In the end, Rawlinson concedes, that it is unlikely Naushirwan was distinguished as the "just" without a reason;—the fact is, neither he nor Gibbon has proved the contrary. In his article on the Sassanians in the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Nöldeke recognises Naushirwan as a just king, though in his later work he seems to retract this opinion.

It is curious to observe how Malcolm, in grudging the epithet "just" to Naushirwan, stultifies himself. In one breath, he says that the vigilance and justice of Naushirwan were the great source of the prosperity of his territories. In another, he urges that the man who is to repress rebellion, to retaliate

attack, and to obtain power over foreign nations, in order to preserve his own in peace must commit many actions at variance with humanity and justice. Justice between a strong and a weak State is an unheard-of thing, one might say, not to be dreamt of in the present unregenerate state of human nature. The term justice, as commonly understood, is confined to equality and impartiality in the administration of municipal laws, and not extended to political transactions.

There are endless anecdotes of Naushirwan's love of justice, which Malcolm finely appreciates, and of his just deeds. Naushirwan desired to clear some space in front of his palace, but an old woman who owned a patch of land within it obstinately refused to surrender it, and was left unmolested.

The true significance of this incident has eluded at least one writer. Here was a helpless woman, who could have been easily intimidated, or bought up, or wheedled, and yet Naushirwan preferred to let her alone. If he was so punctilious in little matters where the interests of justice were at stake, he would have scarcely found it in his heart to oppress persons not so utterly helpless. The ugly patch spoilt the fine prospect from the windows of the palace, and yet the Great

King would not exert his powers, for fear of committing even a semblance of injustice. As the Roman ambassador, who admired the prospect and was struck by the anomaly, said, that irregular spot, consecrated as it was by justice, appeared more beautiful than all the surrounding scene. Even in these days, the State, in virtue of its eminent domain, can pounce upon private lands; but this an arbitrary ruler refused to do. That gracious act, among others, coupled with the boast (which Tabari chronicles) of the Arabian Prophet, who was no friend of the Persian Kingdom, that he was born in the reign of the just Naushirwan, places beyond cavil Naushirwan's reputation as thoroughly deserved.

Professor Browne delicately conveys, that Naushirwan's justice was not justice "in our sense of the term." This is really a mystification of the issue. The outside world does not know what sense of justice prevails in Cambridge, nor to what degree it is cultivated in one of its Dons. The Professor might have tried to define the term for himself, at least according to the Socratic methods, if the scientific morality is not in favour in that seat of learning. In its popular acceptation, justice is the distribution of rewards and punishments according to de-

serts, and this idea is prominent in the maxims of justice put into the mouths of the Persian sovereigns by Oriental writers. In its ultimate analysis, justice is a term convertible with expediency, the desire of retaliation or the natural feeling of resentment being at the root of the sentiment of justice. What was expedient in the times of Naushirwan does not cease to be justice, because the same would be inexpedient in the altered circumstances of these days. All the surrounding circumstances must be examined, to see if the particular courses of action taken by Naushirwan, not appearing just at first sight, were dictated by expediency, *i.e.* by a regard for the general well-being of society as then constituted. Justice consists partly in the fulfilment of expectations naturally arising out of the established order; to have defeated those expectations would have been a species of injustice. No one seriously contends that the established order, even in modern societies which love freedom most, is still very just, though that is the distant goal to be kept in view. Similarly, it is most difficult either to affirm or deny, that the curtailment of freedom, implied in the despotism of a single ruler, many centuries back, meant a greater diminution of happiness than the hideous wrong, degradation, and woe of

the existing social system. Would a State, as Persia was, encompassed by dangers all round, have made much headway in the arts of peace and progress, if the people had been left to wrangle ceaselessly over internal affairs, as in the agora of Athens? That is the crucial question. This much is clear, however; the Persian despotism was successful, and made for the prosperity and greatness of the State, so long as the controlling intelligence was of a high calibre. When that intelligence fell below the average, the whole structure toppled down, under the onslaught of a resolute foe.

How do the ancient commonwealths compare with absolutism? They "thought themselves entitled to practise the regulation of every part of private conduct by public authority, on the ground that the State had a deep interest in the whole bodily and mental discipline of every one of its citizens." Collective despotism is not more bearable than the despotism of one man. In some ways, King Demos was worse than the autocrat; the might of the former is irresistible, and its tyranny can be more penetrating. The autocrat can be generous, but there are no instances of generosity displayed by the government of many, in ancient times. The popular assembly could be as capricious as

the autocrat; it was liable to be swayed by gusts of passion. Had the ruling multitude any livelier sense of justice than the autocrat, or more sympathy with fellow beings? The Athenian Ecclesia did nothing to better the condition of slaves who outnumbered the civic population, *i.e.* the body of free citizens.

The essence of pure democracy was, we have it on good authority, that the assembled people should be tyrant. All authority, judicial, legislative, and executive, was concentrated in the mob rule. There was no gradation of authority, but little of delegation, and the mob was its own Court of Appeal. No despot could, singlehanded, possibly wield such unlimited power as the mob; his instruments are often his impediments. The Athenian, which was the best Greek assembly, that assembly which was a collection of lamp-makers, lyre-makers, and leather-sellers, was guilty of follies and crimes, like any other tyrant, and no wonder. After the battle of Arginousai, a number of generals were put to death without any trial. Some of the best men, statesmen who had rendered great services, were ostracised, *i.e.* banished without crime. Also in most Greek cities, the triumph of one political party entailed the slaughter, exile, and confiscation of the other. The sove-

reign mob was, when opportunities offered, as bloodthirsty as any tyrant, if not more.

On the other hand, there were stern limits to the authority of an autocrat, imposed by fear of insurrection; he dared not carry over-legislation to the same excesses as the petty autonomous City-States did. Making every allowance for the invigorating effect of freedom upon character, the lot of the individual was happier under an autocracy than such democracies as the ancients devised. In ancient Persia law was always supreme, and was based on the Avestaic legislation, which, so far as it is preserved, even judged by modern standards, is not unreasonable but for some minor matters, and is far from being Draconic or drastic. This supremacy of law was a great security for freedom. The expression, "the law of the Medes and Persians which altereth not," occurring in the Book of Daniel, is a reminder, that legal institutions had taken deep root in the Persian polity even in very early times, and that judicial decrees were executed with inexorable rigour. Further, the Dinkard reports, that the Avesta laid down rules for the guidance of judges and magistrates and public authorities, and these were far more likely to obey even literally the sacred provisions, than the mere commands of secular authority, which might be easily evaded. The

whole spirit of the Avesta makes it probable, that these provisions were full of tender solicitude for the governed.

We may safely hazard the conjecture, that the procedure of those days was not buried under a mass of technicalities and formalities as in these, that the patriarchal justice was cheaper and more consonant with the needs of less complex societies, and that the dishonest had not the same chances of escaping the net of justice. It would be futile to decry the justice of Naushirwan on *à priori* grounds. Darius Hystaspes, by instituting royal courts, had dissociated judicial from executive functions.

Montesquieu's teaching has since familiarised the Western world with the desirability of separating the powers of the State and lodging them in different hands; and though part of that teaching is impugned in these days, the wisdom of making the judiciary independent of the executive is accepted with unqualified unanimity. In the Sassanian period, an aggrieved individual had a right of appeal to the king from the decrees of the royal tribunals. The king, the magi, and the great lords, re-tried the cause in open court, to which were admitted the general public. The Sassanian justice was thus no idle formality, but a solemn business con-

ducted on the most approved methods of later ages.

Naushirwan, Mirkhond relates, ordered the execution of eighty tax-gatherers who were found guilty of extortion. Official rapacity, acting on an excitable temperament in the East, at times provokes murders and retaliation, and the conditions of the times must be minutely studied, before the punishment is regarded as excessive. The number of executions may be also exaggerated. That eminent jurist, Sir James Stephen, recommended without compunction the destruction of really bad offenders, and Naushirwan possibly entertained similar ideas.

The extermination of Mazdakites has yet to be reconciled with Naushirwan's instincts of justice. It is doubtful if they were utterly extirpated; probably the doctrines were renounced by others, after a certain number received short shrift. These people were not a mere sect; they were a gang of lawless and dastardly marauders masquerading as religious reformers. In Gibbon's phraseology, they appropriated the richest lands and the most beautiful females for the use of the sectaries. Mazdak preached communism of wives and property, and sanctioned incestuous relations as lawful. His insolence reached such a height that

he demanded of King Kobad, who was his adherent, access to the king's mother, and she had great difficulty in keeping the man at a distance. Tabari and Mirkhond concur in stating, that Mazdak's disciples claimed the right to plunder the rich and to abduct the ladies of the most illustrious families in the land. Mirkhond adds, that whole villages were terrorised by these men and deserted. Professor Browne's special pleading on behalf of the Mazdakites will not hold water in the presence of these crowded facts. Kobad's sympathy with these anarchical tenets excited an insurrection, and once cost him his throne. Was it possible for Naushirwan to stem this torrent of villainies, which threatened to engulf society and to stir up universal hatred and reprisals, without prosecuting and executing the laws against the infamous votaries? What other solution was within his reach? Let the doctors decide who throw stones at Naushirwan. After punishing the marauders, Tabari and Khundamir narrate, Naushirwan arranged for the restitution of chattels and lands to their rightful owners, and the restoration of the kidnapped ladies to their suffering families. Lands of which the owners were not found were presented to the poor. Modern societies allow highwaymen and brigands, who openly

commit depredations, to be killed on the spot. The ancient societies were not so stable, and the law-abiding instincts and habits had not grown into the strength manifested in these days, which fact necessitated the recourse to stern measures against dangerous malefactors. Sound historical judgments, it will be granted, cannot be framed without a delicate balancing of considerations like the foregoing.

Rawlinson's occasionally casual mode of reasoning on Persian history is laid bare by his disparagement of Naushirwan's intellectual faculties. His conviction is, that Naushirwan did not rise very high above the ordinary Oriental level; and this in the teeth of the fact, "that Persians and many Greeks of his day exalted him above measure as capable of apprehending the deepest problems of philosophy." Hence, we may from this saying extract the following beautiful canon of historical criticism, viz., that where direct contemporaneous evidence is available, it is to be rejected in favour of a surmise, as to the Oriental intellect, derogatory to it. Gibbon, too, profoundly reasons that Naushirwan's studies were ostentatious and superficial. That Naushirwan did dabble in philosophy and delighted in controversies is not contested even by Rawlinson, who, however, needlessly packs some sophistries in his

single paragraph on the topic. In the first place, he relies on Agathias, whom Gibbon and other writers brand as generally ignorant and presumptuous, and who, we know, was a lawyer, and not perhaps acquainted with philosophy at all. Secondly, the Oriental mind, it is patent to intelligent observers, is cast more in a philosophic or meditative, than in a practical mould. Witness Arnold's oft-quoted verses:

> "The East bowed low before the blast
> In patient deep disdain,
> She heard the legions thunder past,
> And plunged in thought again."

Rawlinson is further awed by the profundities of Greek thought, in comparison with the Oriental.

The classicists are in the habit of going into hysterics over everything Greek. Under the empire of cramped and contracted notions, of which some choice examples are the articles on Persia in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* and Niebuhr's "Lectures on Ancient History," they pass by the Greek traditions, that the Greeks were themselves the pupils of Egyptians and had learnt at the latter's feet their first lessons in civilisation. Recent archæological discoveries converge to the same result, and it is generally agreed that

the East is the home of civilisation. Except in their political experiments and the cultivation of the Fine Arts, the Greeks of the classical period did not distance some Eastern nations in the race. Metaphysical speculation was rife in the lands of the Vedas and the Avesta, perhaps prior to 500 B.C. It evidences great power and range, and differs from Greek thought, in that the most is made of the slightest hints thrown out by Grecian thinkers, and that these have been enthusiastically and closely studied for centuries in the West. In a computation of Pliny or Hermippus, the complete edition of the Avestaic writings, or what were called Zoroaster's works, ran to 2,000,000 lines, but the greatest and most valuable part thereof, with the exception of a fragment, has irretrievably perished. However, confining ourselves to the relics of Eastern antiquity which the hand of Time has spared, it is acknowledged that the Sankhya System and Buddhism formulated the theories of Evolution and Heredity twenty-two centuries before Spencer and Darwin, and the Vedanta philosophy has probed the deepest mysteries of Being and the Universe. Whilst Plato's eternal and self-subsisting Ideas and the Aristotelian Forms have faded into curiosities of speculation, science is more and more gravi-

tating towards the Vedantin, *i.e.* Oriental, doctrines of a universal soul (or Energy) pervading all nature, and the essential unity of matter living and not living. Naushirwan's statecraft was of a high order, and reveals a capacious intellect qualified to master the intricacies of philosophic schools, as deposed to by his contemporaries.

Professors Nöldeke and Browne have a heavy score to settle with the Sassanian kings, and Naushirwan as well, on account of their persecution of Christians. The sources they have tapped are notably the Syrian writers. The whole tenor of Naushirwan's conduct, which is unfolded below, belies the accusation. He augmented the number of Christians in his dominion by transplanting colonies. He permitted them the free exercise of their religion, and allowed them to build churches and elect bishops and conduct services at their pleasure. In a treaty with Constantinople, he expressly stipulated for the protection, in the enjoyment and practice of their known opinions, of the seven Grecian sages whom he had sheltered against the persecuting edict of that most Christian prince Justinian. Furthermore, on an appeal to the throne by the Armenian clergy, Naushirwan removed the Satrap of Tenschahpoor, who attempted to propagate Zoroas-

trianism, and appointed in his room, in A.D. 552, Veschnas Vrahran. Naushirwan was married to a Christian wife, and allowed her to retain her religion. His son Noush-zâd, by the same wife, professed Christianity, and was even contemptuous of the national religion. He vented his gratitude by revolting against his father, and met with an unhappy end, on which historians are at variance. Naushirwan encouraged, it is not disputed, freedom of discussion in religious matters. There is not a tittle of evidence, so far as Naushirwan is concerned, to support the mendacities of the Syrian writers; the evidence is all in favour of Naushirwan's tolerance and philanthropy.

Moreover, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion, that the Christians in Persia were a danger to the empire. In the Roman war which broke out in A.D. 337–8 in the reign of Shapor II., the Christians openly threw in their sympathies with Constantine. A Syrian Bishop, Aphraates, who was a Persian subject, used at the time insulting language to Shapor, in a homily. The toleration of Yezdegird I. and Balâsh is praised by the Syrians and Armenians, and Shapor III. and Perwiz were notoriously partial to Christians. The *ipse dixits* of Syrian writers cannot be taken seriously. There may have been isolated cases,

but no systematic spirit of persecution is discernible in the Sassanian epochs.

The Christian history of persecutions in the Roman Empire affords sufficient collateral evidence to prop up the above contentions. Dadson, in his "Evolution of Religion," makes these animadversions: "Christianity has always been more of a political than religious organisation. The many forgeries and falsehoods in which Christian writers have been detected, should make us receive with great caution their statements. The presumption is (seeing that from what they represent they were a small and obscure sect) that the Christians have invented many of the tales of persecution, and greatly exaggerated others. The word persecution has been abundantly used by Christian writers for describing punishments awarded to them for breaking the laws. Wherever they went, they organised themselves into regular bodies. They sternly held aloof from the Pagans, and refused communication with them even in the daily offices of life. Their intolerance, ignorance, and audacity knew no bounds, and as soon as they gained sufficient strength they deluged the streets of every city of the empire with blood. They were the first to resort to violence. . . . The current religion among us

is a very different thing from what it was a century or two ago."

In speaking of Christianity, it is imperative to accentuate one aspect—the changes which came over it. Morley defines Christianity as "the name for a variety of changes which took place during the first centuries of the Christian era in men's ways of thinking and feeling about their spiritual relations to unseen powers, about their moral relations to one another, about the basis and type of social union." These changes seem to be in progress still, under the influence of the "higher criticism." The early Christians, it is to be noted, nourished a deep scorn and hatred against the whole frame of society, when placed in the midst of non-Christian populations. The Church claimed for centuries to be an independent and self-constituted body, an *imperium in imperio*, and Christianity held by the doctrine of a divine law, independent of and superior to the temporal law, which the faithful were at liberty to set at naught. Such doctrines no self-respecting State could tolerate, and they are not tolerated in these days. Political progress became possible in modern Europe, only after the pretensions of the Churches to interfere in politics were overthown. The attitude of early Christianity towards politics

and non-Christian States should not be lost sight of, when the story of its woes and persecutions is paraded.

Gibbon offers some trenchant observations on the mental decrepitude of Christians in the Dark Ages: "Their credulity (in accepting extravagant tales which display the fiction without the genius of poetry) debased and vitiated the faculties of the mind; they corrupted the evidence of history, and superstition gradually extinguished the hostile light of philosophy and science." These words would hold good equally of the Syrian writers. Moreover, to understand Persian history the credentials of the writers should be strictly examined. Every nationality, Greeks, Romans, Syrians and Armenians, had an interest in aspersing the character of the Persians and their kings.

The sage and saintly Emperor Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 161–180) was driven, in the second century A.D., to persecute Christians. Why? The *Encyclopædia* answers: Because they declared war against all heathen rites, and at least indirectly against the government which permitted them to exist. In his eyes they were the foes of social order, which it was the first duty of every citizen to maintain. The probabilities are overwhelming that the Persian Empire was

harassed in the same fashion by the sect. The so-called persecutions were the equivalent, in Christian nomenclature, of legal processes to compel peace and order. Naushirwan strictly forbade proselytism, and that must have been a heinous crime in the eyes of the Syrian Christians. In the seventeenth century, many Continental countries expelled the Jesuits, and in the twentieth, France, a professedly Christian country, has no other resource but to suppress the monastic and other religious orders. So many centuries of advancement have not altered their propensity to political mischief and intrigues. Further, science had not armed the ancient States with the same weapons, material and intellectual, to fight insidious enemies of order as it has in the twentieth century, and the apparent excessive rigour (if it ever was excessive) exercised by Persia in putting them down can be properly explained as proportioned to the gravity of the situation.

To sum up, Naushirwan was a benevolent despot after the type which commended itself to Voltaire and Turgot, who did not care for popular forms of government. The ancient democracies did not thrive well—the narrow and malignant politics and interminable squabbles of the ancient Greek City-States are an edifying example—and despotism

was not such a misfortune in those days. The Germans of our day deem it prudent to quietly submit to despotism, and Naushirwan's autocratic rule must be judged by the same criteria. He combined rare ability as a military commander, surpassing talents as an administrator and legislator, a sacred zeal for the welfare of his people and for reforms, and a noble ardour for all kinds of learning. His unrivalled sagacity, his devotion to the hallowed principles of justice, and his enlightenment, far in advance of the age, have shed a lustre round his name; and he gave an impulse to learning by which Europe enormously profited in the Middle Ages. His name deserves to be inscribed on the Scroll of Fame as one of the greatest benefactors of mankind.

VII

Downfall of the Sassanian Empire

THE House of Sassan gave to Persia twenty-eight monarchs, who ruled for 425 years, from A.D. 226 to A.D. 651. The founder, Ardeshir Babekan or Artaxerxes I., was an intrepid military leader and a wise law-giver. He defeated the forces of Artaban in three battles, and at length slew the king. He was noted for his love of justice, and was strict in enforcing law and order. The Satraps were under proper control, and the king was *au courant* with all that happened within his dominions. By sheer force of character and ability, he had climbed up the ladder, and his insight into the turmoil of the times told him that a State could not exist without religion. He strenuously laboured to promote political unity, suppressing intermediaries or semi-independent vassals, and his idea was to build up a strong cohesive State by eliminating the elements of discord, which sprang from religious dissensions. Rawlinson says, that in the times of Ardeshir, Western

Asia was a seething pot in which were mixed up a score of contradictory creeds, old and new. Religion was, in those days, politically a potent disintegrating agency, duties to the State being not inculcated or recognised perhaps by any of the creeds, except the Zoroastrian. Herodotus asserts in confirmation of this fact, that the sacrificer, among the Persians, prayed for the welfare of the king and the whole people.

Among the successors of Ardeshir were some well-meaning and amiable men, and also some who exercised their power arbitrarily. During very nearly the whole period of four hundred years, there was chronic warfare between the Sassanian Empire and Rome or Constantinople, which simply enfeebled and impoverished the combatants, without benefiting either in any way. The warfare was waged with varying fortune, and in the end the boundaries between them were very much the same as in the beginning of the insane rivalry.

The last of the Sassanians, Yezdegird III., was a weakling. He was called to the throne young, and retired from one position to another before the advancing enemy. He was reduced to a pitiable plight, when his generals had been killed one after another. Thus the vicissitudes of Persia under Ardeshir

and Yezdegird convey the moral, that the mass of the ancient Persians were endowed with little or no initiative.

Between the Sassanian and Achemenian kings, the gap is filled up by the Selucidæ and the Arsacidæ. The Seleucidæ were Macedonians who were despised by the Hellenic nations in their palmy days, a race of arrogant and bungling intruders, with little or no political capacity, who regarded their Asiatic subjects as mere slaves. They held on to the satrapial system which had been worked out by the Achemenians, but neglected the important checks and safeguards which the supreme political genius of Darius Hystaspes had provided against abuses. The Satraps were freely accused of outrageous conduct, whilst the Seleucidæ kings themselves did not shrink from tyrannical acts. In 150 B.C., Mithridates I. snuffed out the family.

The Parthians were a Tartar people, rude, coarse, and clumsy. They were "treacherous in war, indolent and unrefined in peace." Niebuhr asserts, the Parthians were barbarians and had oppressed a nation far more civilised than themselves and their religion. However, the yoke of the Parthians on the high-spirited nation was lighter than that of the Macedonians, who, in their shortsightedness, had excluded their subject races from all honour-

able and lucrative offices. The last two or three Parthian kings embraced or encouraged the Zoroastrian religion, and Niebuhr seems to be at sea in that regard.

No vivid portraiture of the character of the Sassanian Persians has been left as of the private life of the Persians under the Achemenides by the Greeks. We have consequently to fall back on conjectures, and Rawlinson thus summarises his impressions: "They had ruder manners, a grosser taste, less capacity for government and organisation than the Achemenian Persians; they were, in fact, coarsened by Tartar rule; they were vigorous, energetic, proud, brave." It is easy enough to believe that five centuries and a half of servitude had affected for the worse the Persian character, but otherwise the assertions are somewhat too sweeping. Rawlinson dwells a little too much on the luxury of the Sassanian epochs, as if it were synonymous with corruption, and sapped the virility of the nation. From the economic point of view, luxury is unproductive expenditure and therefore an evil, but it does not necessarily enervate the character. The splendours of the Sassanian Court and its pageants, on which the Moslem writers love to expatiate, betoken not a ruder and coarser generation, but a higher refinement and culture.

Rawlinson epitomises the Sassanian régime and the national characteristics under it as follows: "Simple habits appear to have prevailed among the people; polygamy, though lawful (which is a moot point) was not greatly in use; the maxims of Zoroaster, which commanded purity, piety, and industry, were fairly observed. Women seem not to have been kept in seclusion. The general condition of the population was satisfactory. Most of the Sassanian monarchs seem to have been desirous of governing well. Provincial rulers were well watched and well checked; great pains were taken that justice should be honestly administered. So far as was possible under a despotism, oppression was prevented." This is on the whole a more accurate picture than the one attempted by Nöldeke, who makes sundry unwarranted statements in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* (Ninth Edition). A Radical thinker has readily approved of the saying, that a benevolent despotism is the best form of government (that is, the most efficient), but that the difficulty is to secure a succession of able despots. The despotism of the Sassanians was tempered by justice and devotion to the welfare of the people. They were relentless enemies of corruption in public offices, and unswerving upholders of law and legality.

In discussing the downfall of the Sassanian Empire, it is too much the fashion to take for granted, it being so much easier to do so, that the body politic was in a putrescent state. Rawlinson, as we have just seen, does not countenance this view. The causes of the phenomenon have been miscalculated, or misjudged. There are fallacies, conscious or unconscious, lurking in the views of the Moslem and European writers on the subject. Dozy makes out "that a great disease consumed both empires, (*i.e.* the Byzantine and Persian), that they were burdened by a crushing despotism; that on either hand the history of the dynasties formed a medley of horrors, that of the state a series of persecutions born of dissensions in religious matters." Professor Browne advertises, that "the Persian power, against which Islam hurled itself, was rotten to the core, honeycombed with intrigues, seething with discontent, and torn asunder by internecine and fratricidal strife."

It is a favourite theme of Moslem writers, that the Persians were stricken with depravity of manners before they were subdued by Islam, and in that manner they hope to exalt Islam at the expense of the ancient faith. All savants, who have studied the Zoroastrian ethics, are unanimous in the opinion, that it is pure and elevated. Samuel

Laing boldly avers, in his "Modern Zoroastrian," that it comprises all that is best in the codes of Judaism, Buddhism, and Christianity. The Mahomedan creed, with its hierarchy of angels and devils, is, contrary to received ideas, a Polytheism, and the conceptions copied by it freely from other creeds are grossly materialised. The Koran contains no categorical imperatives, no exhortations, as those of Buddha, to keep faith, cultivate love and charity and kindness, or even to tell the truth. In fact, the five practical duties of Islam are divorced from the sphere of morality.

The Zoroastrian doctrines were carried to logical and absurd extremes by the Mobeds or priests in some respects, as contended by Darmsteter. But there is no sign that the morals of the people were more lax before than after the Mahomedan conquest, unless it is considered that depravity is a necessary prelude to political decline. In the eighteenth century, Poland was dismembered and wiped out as a separate kingdom, yet it is not pretended that the people were sunk at the time in the depths of moral abasement.

The chaos which delivered Persia an easy prey to the Arabs was the outcome of personal ambitions, political intrigues, and

the feebleness of the central authority. The personality of a Czar or a Kaiser counts for a good deal in these days; in ancient Persia, that of the King of Kings was of transcendent importance. The Persian kings were wont to lead in person the embattled hosts, and their presence often augured victory. Some of Naushirwan's successors, from effeminacy or for other reasons, scarcely ventured into the battlefield. Two of his immediate successors were deposed, and usurpation and violence were in vogue.

The degeneracy of kings and nobles, though not of the nation, is not a debatable point. Khusrao Perwiz fled before the advance of the Romans, who defeated his troops and marched into Ctesiphon and Ispahan. Their footsteps were marked by a trail of devastation, destruction of the royal palaces, plunder of the treasury, and dispersal of Khusrao's retinue. He did not lift a finger to roll back this avalanche of ruin, and evidently consulted his own ease. All this time, doubtless, the Arabs with their new-born aspirations were scanning the political horizon, with eager eyes and hearts throbbing with joy. The Titanic scuffle between the two empires was a godsend to them; the two could not have better played the game, to oblige the common enemy.

Siroës, or Kobad, who mounted the throne in A.D. 628, murdered his own father Perviz, and slew the members of the royal family. His brothers, Mirkhond apprises us, were remarkable for their talents and merit, and their extinction was a cruel blow to the kingdom. After that, the crown circulated from one noble to another, and eleven ephemeral rulers intervened between Perwiz or Chosroës II. and Yezdegird III. during the space of five years. "Anarchy prevailed everywhere; the distracted kingdom was torn in pieces by the struggles of rival pretenders, and every province, and almost each city of Persia, was the scene of discord, independence, and bloodshed." The bonds of discipline were relaxed, and loyalty to the throne disappeared, with the disappearance of the royal line.

The curse of despotism is, that the whole machine falls out of gear when the directing hand is removed, and that a limited few, who may not be the fittest, ever go through the mill of administrative and political training, or acquire organising capacity and experience of public affairs. The political welter reacted on the soldiery, who made a brave stand to the last against the Arabs. On the death of Mehran, and also, later, on the death of Rustom, both Persian generals, they were

panic-stricken and fled in disorder, though, shortly before, they had inflicted a defeat on the Arabs at the battle of the Bridge. The people and the soldiery were not accustomed to concerted action, being too much dependent on leaders, and could not throw up in an emergency men to improvise an organisation. Absolutism tends to crush out originality and individuality, and the anarchy was not the symptom of a social disease, but a consequence of the breakdown of an inelastic system.

The geographical position of Persia was beset with perils. It was exposed to a cross-fire, in the era immediately preceding the extinction of the Sassanides; on the northerly frontier, to the incursions of the Byzantine Empire, and on the south, to those of the Arabs. What was worse, Persia had been worn out by her protracted struggles with the enemy at Constantinople, preparatory to the Arab invasion. The thirty years' war, which, commencing in A.D. 502 in the reign of Kobad I., closed with the peace of A.D. 532, was followed by other wars, already detailed, in the reign of Chosroës I. till his death in A.D. 578. In A.D. 579, in the reign of Homisdas IV., Persia was invaded by Maurice. From 603 to 610, Chosroës II. had to grapple with Phocas, while, from 626 to 628, Heraclius

penetrated into Persia, causing havoc and desolation. In A.D. 591, Persia was in the throes of a crisis, which was successfully surmounted; the Arabs, Khazars, and the Turkish hordes, harried it simultaneously in different quarters. Even a vigorous organism cannot long survive well-directed attacks, from several enemies, at the same time

Above all, there was one weakness inherent in the constitution of the empire. It was a congeries of heterogeneous nationalities, during the whole period of its history. Naushirwan's empire comprised dozens of nations, and by extending it, he made it unwieldy and sowed the seeds of decay and dissolution. His towering genius could keep the incoherent fragments from flying asunder, but none of his successors inherited his mental calibre or his moral grandeur. Their incompetency gave scope to the free play of disruptive forces. Revolts were frequent in the Sassanian period, and even the just rule of Naushirwan did not abate the evil. Railways, and telegraphic wires, and steamboats, have in these days greatly simplified the problem of governing scattered dominions and jarring nationalities. They have consolidated empires. In the absence of modern appliances, the ancient empires were destined to fall to pieces. Again, in the early stages of

civilisation, a man owed allegiance, not to the State, but to his religion, and the multiplicity of creeds in the East produced centrifugal tendencies difficult to control. In the whirl of creeds at deadly feud, patriotism could not well germinate or develop. Patriotism could do wonders, as all modern history attests.

The Arabs, in their hostility to the empire, enjoyed one tremendous advantage. The vigorous and practical genius of Mahomed fused into a single nation the numerous tribes, whose fighting capacities had been evoked and built up by their internecine conflicts, and his religion was a unifying power. The precepts of the Koran were calculated to infuse a warlike and fanatical spirit into the converts. Religious fanaticism extinguished Moslem learning and sciences. To this day, wherever Islam is not diluted by humanising influences, fanaticism is as rampant as ever. The faithful were bidden to spread the religion in all lands. If they were victorious in the Holy War, their highest ambition in life was fulfilled. If they fell in the Jehad, they could pass away in ecstasies at the prospect of the delights of Paradise and the embraces of Houris. The singleness of purpose of the Arabs carried all before it, when confronted with the divided counsels

and the treacheries which rent the loosely-cemented empire. The inexperience and helpless character of Yezdegird III. also robs their enterprise of part of its credit.

In Persia, the inevitable sequel to the incessant wars, unprofitable for the most part, must have been economic destitution or misery, which must have been aggravated by the lavish display and extravagance of the royal court. The Moslem writers represent, that Perwiz had built a number of palaces for every season, and owned thrones of priceless value; that his harem consisted of 12,000 fair charmers, and that in his stables were stalled 5000 horses and 1200 elephants. After discounting some percentage from these figures, the fact remains that such ostentation must have been a serious drain on the resources of the nation. Plague had started its ravages in Naushirwan's reign, and when Heraclius, in A.D. 628, after his devastations, retired from Persian soil, the land was staggering under a famine. This accumulation of calamities was sufficient to break the people's spirit. The measure of Persia's exhaustion is to be estimated by the period, about 220 years, which elapsed before the recovery of her national government under Yakubibni-Laith of the Saffâri dynasty (who died A.D. 878), and the expulsion of the Arabs. Perhaps the economic

distress dragged in its train the other evils, and sealed the fate of ancient Persia.

The complete and speedy collapse of Persia, which has excited the wonder of some historians, was due to the causes already discussed, aided by the fury of the Arabs, who ruthlessly set themselves to destroy the language, literature, traditions, and institutions of ancient Persia, and succeeded but too well. A process which may by analogy be called Arabification accounts for the strange phenomenon, and to say, as many writers have argued, that the Persians welcomed the "naked robbers of the desert," and were panting for liberation from the priestly shackles of the Sassanian period, is a far-fetched fantasy.

There are reasons, apart from what has been said, for thinking that the economic condition of the Sassanian Empire could not have been very satisfactory. The classical writers tell us, that the Persians were averse to bargaining, as involving a departure from the strict requirements of veracity. Trade must have languished. Agriculture must have been the mainstay of the State revenues and the principal source of wealth. That industry is notoriously subject to fluctuations, and vagaries of the season.

There were, we may conjecture, some minor causes at work undermining the security of

the State. The union of Church and State, which was inaugurated by Artaxerxes, must have been the root of some mischief. Sacerdotalism is never favourable to liberty of thought and action. It elaborated a minute ritual, and overlaid the natural theology of Zoroaster with excrescences foreign to its substance. The object of Artaxerxes, looking to his testament, was like that of Napoleon—to subordinate religion to the State, to make it an instrument of State; but it is possible, under some of his feeble successors, the priesthood stepped beyond their province and usurped much power. Then they might have been urged by their zeal to sacrifice the best interests of the State—the contentment and tranquillity of the people. However, there is no proof that the respective boundaries of ecclesiastical and secular power were actually confused to any serious extent, as in the Byzantine Empire, in which the consummation reached contributed not a little to its disasters.

Asiatic kingdoms were not destined to attain a high degree of stability. Being divided by gigantic natural barriers, they never learnt to co-operate, and never combined to keep out a common enemy. The sentiment of solidarity did not take possession of Asia, whilst it has been the means of knitting to-

gether Europe. It was promoted in the latter Continent by the early adoption of a common religion, and the doctrines of balance of power, adhesion to which was one consequence of the solidarity, and the rights of nationalities, further compacted the separate States. The publicists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries declared the maintenance of European stability as the supreme end of international politics, but no analogous movement ever took birth in Asia.

Again, persecutions of Zoroastrian priests bulk very largely in some modern books as an incubus which predisposed the subjects of the Sassanian Empire to accept salvation at the hands of Arabs. T. W. Arnold maintains in his book, "The Preaching of Islam," that the Zoroastrian priests were particularly intolerant, and persecuted even the nonconformist sects, Manichæans, Mazdakites, Gnostics, and others. The Mazdakites were dealt with as outlaws by a king who believed in the power of the State to coerce unruly elements. Mani, Al Biruni assures us, courted his doom by returning to the State from which he had been banished, and thus violating his engagement. Naushirwan, we know, resorted to various expedients to stimulate the repopulation of Persia, and Mani's injunctions, issued in the middle of the third century A.D., prohibiting

marriage and the begetting of children, must have been peculiarly obnoxious. The Gnostics were a Christian sect, and they must have repeated, as a matter of course, the tactics of the parent organisation. The doings of the latter in the Roman Empire have been detailed; they went so far even as to refuse to pay taxes. Thus the nonconformist sects were guilty of political crimes, and indirectly aimed at the subversion of the State. The State was bound to protect itself, and the religious persecutions of the Sassanians are therefore a gratuitous invention of people, bent on making excuses for Moslem intolerance.

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